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**THE NOWADAYS GIRLS
IN THE ADIRONDACKS**



"LOOK! LOOK!" SYLVIA WHISPERED (*Page 293*)

THE NOWADAYS GIRLS IN THE ADIRONDACKS

OR
THE DESERTED BUNGALOW ON
SARANAC LAKE

BY
GERTRUDE CALVERT HALL

ILLUSTRATED BY
E. C. CASWELL

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"Look! Look!" Sylvia whispered . (Page 293)	<i>Frontispiece</i>
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THE NOWADAYS GIRLS
IN THE ADIRONDACKS

CHAPTER I

THE NOWADAYS CLUB

THE chugging taxicab stopped in front of the apartment on Central Park, West, and the uniformed door attendant bowed out of it, and into the marble vestibule, a demure girl with rosy cheeks.

"Miss Pursell?" she asked, and there was that in her voice which made the elevator boy look a second time; and he was not unused to seeing pretty girls and hearing them speak.

"Third floor, miss," he said, with a quick touch of his hand to his much-gold-braided cap. Then, as he clanged the steel-grilled door shut, he favored the hall-man with a distinct wink, which Rose Bancroft did not see. But had she seen it she would, perhaps, have given it little consideration, since it did not concern her.

What did concern her was reaching her friend Sylvia Pursell as soon as possible. There were more reasons than one for this, but perhaps the one with which we may now concern ourselves was that Rose had been travelling since early morning, having but just arrived at the Grand Central Terminal from Syracuse.

Travelling in even the best-portered Pullman, in the

middle of the "Chicago Special," is very apt to grime one up, especially if the aforesaid one be wearing a particularly light and dainty dress. So Rose, as she was shot upward in the smooth-running elevator, wondered whether the coloured maid at the Grand Central had made sure that there was no cinder dust on the end of her nose.

"For," reflected Rose to herself, "if there is one thing more than another, that makes a girl lose her smartness and dignity, it is a black spot on the end of her nose."

And Rose had her special reasons for wanting to look at least "smart" when she reached Sylvia's apartment. I'll tell you why later. She ventured to glance into the bevelled mirror which made up the whole back of the car, but the electric bulb was shaded with a rose-tinted glass, and while it made a very pretty effect, still it was not conducive to illumination.

"I'm almost sure there's a spot," thought Rose, but she dared not raise her veil to make sure. And just then the elevator lad, who had been favouring his solitary passenger with more than one surreptitious glance, called out, in a most respectful tone of voice, a voice not at all in keeping with his previous facetious wink:

"Your floor! Miss Pursell's!"

"Thank you," said Rose, quietly, and stepped out.

A few moments later, Rose having been ushered into a pretty reception hall, and thence to the drawing-

room, she and Sylvia had their arms around each other, and Sylvia was kissing her friend, regardless of whether or not there was a spot on Rose's face—her nose or anywhere else.

"It was so sweet of you to come down from Syracuse, my dear!"

"Nonsense, it was just perfectly lovely of you to ask me. I am *so* interested!"

"I thought you'd be! Did you have a tiresome trip?"

"Oh, not especially so. We were a little late, but made it up. Mrs. Blake, mamma's friend, you know, came part way with me."

"That was nice. Janet, take Miss Bancroft's things, and then tell Perkins we'll have tea in here."

"Yes, Miss Pursell."

"Are the other girls here?" asked Rose, as she made sure this time, by a hasty glance in a well-lighted mirror, that there was *not* a spot on her nose.

"No, they're coming to-night, I presume. Hazel was away when my telegram reached her, but she left Chicago last night, and ought to be here now. I'm not so sure when Alice will arrive. You know her style."

"Indeed I do. If she doesn't arrive to-day, next week will do. But are you really going to carry out your plan?"

"I most certainly *am*, my dear! I don't plan things and then not do them."

"Yes, I know, Sylvia, but this going off to the Adirondacks, all by ourselves——"

"But we'll not be by ourselves. Aunt Theodora Leigh Brownley will chaperon us, and——"

"You didn't leave out any of her name; did you?" and Rose laughed a merry laugh, that sounded like the tinkle of ice in a strawberry-tinted pitcher of lemonade on a hot day.

"She rather likes her whole title," answered Sylvia. "But you knew she was going with us; didn't you?"

"I wasn't sure," and Rose turned at the entrance of the butler with the tray of tea things as though she expected to see some one else.

"Oh, indeed mamma wouldn't consent to my making up the party at all until I had arranged for a chaperon. Of course Aunt Theodora Leigh Brownley is rather a handicap in ways, but she *is* so good, and she doesn't mind sitting up until all hours at a dance."

"Oh, then we *are* going to dance!" and the eyes of Rose glistened, while her breath seemed to come faster between her parted lips.

"Of course, my dear! There will be some men up there, I *hope*!"

"Oh, won't it be just perfectly all right!"

"I hope you'll find it so. Let me see—you take lemon?" and Sylvia paused questioningly with a slice held over Rose's cup.

"Lemon, yes. And two lumps, please."

The tinkle of silver on eggshell china filled a pause,

and then the girls looked into each other's eyes. In Rose's was a question she wanted to ask, but hardly dared. Several times it was at her lips, but somehow she forced it back. And when she had made up her mind to ask it there came a ring of the bell.

"Telephone?" questioned Rose.

"No, the entrance hall. I wonder——"

Sylvia paused, listening, and when she heard the unscen caller ask for her she started at the sound of a drawling voice—a voice of Southern unctuousness and richness. Then she arose from the little table, so precipitately as almost to overturn it, though Rose saved it in time.

"Sylvia!" gasped Rose. "You——"

"It's Alice," was the excuse offered. "Here we are, Alice!" she went on, and a girl—a tall, slender girl, with dark eyes, that sparkled from underneath dark brows, and lighted up a face of pure olive-brown tint—fairly swept into the apartment.

"Alice!" cried Sylvia, as she kissed her and then passed her on to Rose for a like ceremony. "How ever did you get here?"

"Why, yo'all seem surprised," was the retort in that slow, unctuous, Southern voice. "I hope I didn't arrive too early," and Alice Harrow flung, rather than "draped" herself, as Sylvia would have done, into a chair.

"Early! It's early for *you*," commented Rose.

"I did get here sooner than I expected," Alice went on. "But I made up my mind, if we were to

carry out the rules of our club, that being ahead of time was better than being late."

"Good for you!" cried Sylvia. "Tea?" she asked, indicating the little table.

"Land, no! It's too hot! Lemonade if you have it, with a bit of mint crushed in it—not too much crushed, and a slice of real lemon floating on top. Then just a suggestion of nutmeg. But if you haven't it, ice water will do as well," and she suddenly switched off, as she saw Rose gazing at her with rather open-mouthed wonder.

"No, indeed. Janet shall make it at once!" exclaimed Sylvia.

"Well, are you surprised to see me?" demanded Alice, a moment later, when the maid had left the room.

"Surprised isn't the word for it!" Sylvia said. "We were just talking about you——"

"I wondered why my ears burned!" laughingly broke in Alice, who seemed unusually bright and crisp for a native of the Southern clime.

"We were just saying that we feared you would be the last to arrive," went on Sylvia, with a smile. "As it is you have reached here before Baby!"

"No! You don't mean it!"

"But I do, my dear!"

"To think of besting Hazel Reed! Oh, that's just splendid. I——"

Alice arose and was about to execute a few steps of a new dance, but, at that moment, the maid came

with the elaborately ordered glass of lemonade on a little silver tray, and it was only by the most skilful turn, as though extricating herself and her partner from a crowded corner of the ballroom floor, that Alice saved herself from an accident.

"Oh, that's delicious!" she murmured, as she sipped the spiced, icy drink. "Your butler must be a Southerner, Sylvia."

"We never knew it. But I'm glad you like it. Yes, you are here before Hazel, though she may arrive any minute."

"And when she comes," said Rose, "the Nowadays Club will have a full membership present. Then, I suppose, Sylvia will condescend to give a more detailed explanation of the mysterious telegrams she sent us. All I know is that we're going to spend the summer in the Adirondacks."

"Isn't that enough to know?" asked Alice. "Why seek to force the hands of Fate?" and she reclined lazily in her chair, and languidly closed her eyes.

She opened them a moment later, however, and a bright, vivacious look came over her dark face. She clapped her hands and cried out:

"Oh, girls, I *must* tell you! It's the greatest surprise. You know Minnie Reynolds, that demure, mouse-like girl that was in our class?"

"You mean, Cheese?" asked Rose.

"Yes, that's what we called her—she reminded one so of a mouse, and cheese always has that association for me. Well, Minnie has 'done gone an' got

he'se'f engaged,' as my old coloured mammy would say."

"Who's the fellow?" asked Sylvia. "Any one we know?"

Alice took a long breath, preparatory to answering, but just then the bell rang again.

"Oh, if that *should* be Baby!" murmured Sylvia.

"It *is* Baby!" called out a breezy voice in answer, for the pretty hostess had spoken even as the maid opened the door. "It *is* Baby! Who all's in there?" she went on, eagerly, joyously.

"Hazel Reed!" murmured Alice. "She'll be *furious* when she finds I'm here ahead of her. She can't call me the late Miss Harrow now."

"Oh, you're *all* here!" gasped the newcomer, as she swept into the room—literally swept in, for her dress caught in a light chair that she dragged after her.

"Hello, girls!" she went on. "Oh, Sylvia! *Such* a trip. Two accidents; the taxicab driver nearly ran over an old man, I lost my purse—found it again though, thank goodness. Mislaidd your address and I've been telephoning all over for two mortal hours. But here I am. Kiss me, *everybody*! Oh, but it's good to see you all again."

There was a little cyclone of laughter, and then Sylvia, tinkling a spoon against a cup to attract attention, called out:

"Girls, the Nowadays Club will come to order!"

CHAPTER II

A TELEGRAM

HUSHED voices—voices that had been exchanging greetings and telling experiences—followed the dramatic announcement of Sylvia Pursell. She gazed at her trio of chums, who had seated themselves about the room, in various positions of comfort.

“Pardon me, Madam President.” Alice was on her feet. “But is this a regular meeting, or a special session? I rise to a point of order.”

“I rule that your point of order is not well taken, and for your information I will say that it is a session *most extraordinary*, for we have to talk over our plans for going to the mountains. That is if you girls *are going?*” and she looked around at them, pausing at each face in turn.

“Going!” echoed Hazel, otherwise known as Baby, on account of her rather diminutive size. But she was a lovely dancer.

“I should like to see any one try to keep *me* at home,” Hazel went on, with that breezy Chicago manner of hers that always made the boys look at her a second time, first with surprise, and secondly with admiration. And then they kept on looking, as often as they dared.

"Indeed we are going," declared Alice. "I have heard so much about those wild and rugged mountains, and their grand scenery and——"

"The lakes—don't forget the lakes!" interrupted Rose. "I am just dying for a chance in a canoe with——"

"'A book of verses underneath a bough,'" quoted Sylvia.

"She wants what goes with the book—a young man," declared Hazel.

"I do *not*!" stormed Rose, blushing so that her cheeks, which usually held a most charming centre-tint, were now suffused with carmine.

"Oh, of course she doesn't," soothed Alice. "We forgot about Roy, and——"

"Alice Harrow, if you——"

"Don't mind them," advised Sylvia, but at the mention of the name Roy a shadow seemed to pass over her face. "Let's get on with the meeting. The Nowadays Club will kindly come to extraordinary order and we'll talk about this Adirondack trip. I'm so glad you can all go. Now, first of all I want to speak of——"

"Dresses! What about them?" broke in Hazel. "I simply *must* have some new ones."

"New York is the best place in the world to get them, and in a hurry, too," said Rose. "I was going to have my dressmaker in Syracuse turn me out some, but I decided to wait. We have a week or so; haven't we, Sylvia?"

"About that, my dear. And I'm counting on showing you everything worth seeing in Manhattan in that time. You can order your gowns—the very newest of the new——"

"Which just perfectly describes our club," murmured Hazel.

And since, perhaps, a little description of the club will aid my readers in understanding the object of the four girls, I can find no better opportunity than now of making them acquainted with it.

Sylvia Pursell, whose home was in New York City; Rose Bancroft, of Syracuse; Alice Harrow, who came from an old Southern family, whose estate was in the vicinity of Baltimore, and Hazel Reed, of breezy Chicago, had been chums, roommates, classmates and various other sort of mates at the fashionable boarding school of Miss Stevenson. They had "finished" there, which means they had just begun, and during their final year they had formed the "Nowadays Club."

It was unlike any other organisation, as far as the girls knew. There were no dues, no initiation fees, no set or formal meetings, and no officers. Every one was a president, and whoever cared to do so presided. Usually it was Sylvia, but that was as circumstances dictated.

The object of the club was expressed in the name. The girls were "up-to-the-minute" damsels, and they were devotees of the nowadays idea. That is, they went in for all that was best of such of the

newest matters as came to their attention. As Sylvia said:

“We don’t want to get into a rut!”

And most assuredly they were not in any danger of doing so. They at least investigated everything new, from the latest dance to the newest motor cars. For the girls were all of well-to-do, not to say wealthy, families.

They had formed the little club—membership strictly restricted to four—on the spur of the moment, and it had interested them more than they had expected it would. During the dance craze they invented new steps, some of which were adopted by the dancing class which they attended. If the girls had been in any other position in life than school—if, for instance, they had been young business men—they would have succeeded admirably in at least investigating all the newest fads and fancies, from efficiency and system, to conservation and “turning around on a smaller margin,” as the trade papers call it.

But, as it was, the girls resolved that they would be real “nowadays” girls. Of them it must not be said, “Oh, that’s the way they used to do it.” Rather the tribute must be paid them that: “Well, that’s the way it’s being done nowadays, but I suppose in a week or so something new will crop up, and——”

Well, when it did Sylvia, Rose, Hazel and Alice would not only be ready for it, but waiting impatiently.

And so, during their last year in the boarding school, they had formed the little club. It looked for a time, when they had definitely decided on different colleges, that the organisation would die a natural death. But it only goes to show that real, vital things never die. They may change their form, but they never wholly expire. They still exist.

So it was with the Nowadays Girls.

Sylvia was to go to Wellesley, Rose to Smith, Alice to Bryn Mawr, and Hazel to Vassar. That much had been decided on, the parents having something to say in each case.

At first, when the girls found they were to be separated, there were tears, sighs and protestations. It seemed that they were to go on long journeys to far countries. Then vivacious Sylvia came to the rescue.

"Look here, girls!" she declaimed at a session of the club held in her room one night, "this college life is only for four years, and there are vacations. Besides, the long-distance telephone is available. We may be separated in body but we must not be in spirit. We must still be up-to-date—to the minute and a few seconds past it. We won't give up our club. It shall be all the stronger.

"And we must here and now resolve——"

"Hear! Hear!" half-grunted Hazel, in imitation of an Englishman, "highly excited," at a banquet. "Hear! Hear!"

"We must now resolve——"

"Not to cast our ballots!" broke in Alice.

"This isn't a suffragist meeting," was Rose's rebuke.

"We must resolve," continued Sylvia, whom little could distract, "we must resolve not to give up the spirit we have evolved for ourselves. We will meet and get together whenever we can, after leaving here. We'll have sessions in summer, of course, and spend all our vacations together, if possible. The Christmas Holidays we may except, but the long vacation will give the Nowadays Club even a better chance than we have had here. Now what do you say? Shall we make it a promise?"

She paused to look at her chums. The idea seemed to fill them with enthusiasm.

"I'm for it!" declared Alice.

"It's perfectly fine!" exclaimed Hazel.

"I'm just in love with the idea," Rose said. "I almost cried when I found we were to go to different colleges."

"But it will be all the better for us," declared Sylvia. "For we can absorb all that is best at each institution, bring it away with us, and pass it on to one another. In that way we will each broaden——"

"I don't want to do any *broadening*," broke in Alice. "I'm getting too stout as it is. I'll have to pick up a new step in the hesitation waltz, to make it more difficult."

"I meant broaden our *minds*," Sylvia said, pointedly.

"Oh, that's all right," assented Alice. "Go on."

"That's all there is to it," Sylvia said. "We'll just resolve to meet as often as we can, and be real nowadays girls. Separating now is only a preparation for a newer form of life and healthy activity."

And so it had been decided. The pleasant days at Miss Stevenson's school came to an end in the glories of commencement, with "sweet girl graduates" galore. This was in late May, for as there were repairs to be made on the buildings the term was somewhat shortened.

The Nowadays Girls had separated, with no definite plans for the summer until Sylvia evolved those which, as our story opens, brought the four chums together once more—Rose from Syracuse, Alice from Baltimore, and Hazel from Chicago, she being the last to arrive, much to her chagrin, for she upheld the liveliness of her own town as against Gotham.

In brief the plan was this. Sylvia had proposed a tour of the Adirondacks for that summer, and there was an indefinite understanding that at each succeeding vacation other famous American resorts would be visited. But the Adirondacks was to be the beginning. The girls were to go to Fulton Chain, in the lower Adirondacks, and progress as they pleased, and when they pleased, stopping where fancy dictated, until they reached Saranac.

The four were to be accompanied by Mrs. Theodora Leigh Brownley, a widow, whose husband had

been a noted Confederate soldier. A small property brought her in such a meagre income that she was forced to adopt her young-womanhood occupation of teaching school, and she was one of the best-beloved instructresses at Miss Stevenson's establishment. Mrs. Brownley was called "Aunt" not only by courtesy, but through love, for she was a charming character, and the girls were very fond of her, especially our four. So much did they love her that when Sylvia had proposed the Adirondack tour, and a chaperon had been decreed by Mrs. Pursell as absolutely necessary, Aunt Theodora had been selected.

Mrs. Brownley had served as such before. In fact she made it a sort of business to escort parties of young ladies from the school on summer outings. She had made several trips to Europe as such a conductor, and while rather grave and dignified, she could very easily adapt herself to circumstances. Then, too, she was very glad of the added income which this chaperoning provided. So every one was satisfied.

The trip had practically been decided on before Sylvia's friends had reached New York, but after she had summoned them by telegraph, she wanted to make sure that none of them had changed her plans.

"And I'm glad none of you have," she said, as the maid came in to clear away the tea service, Hazel having been refreshed with a specially-brewed cup. "I think we shall have a lovely summer."

"I'm positive of it!" declared Rose, with conviction. Again she looked around, half expectantly, as

a masculine step was heard in the hall. It was only the butler, however.

"Miss Pursell," he said, in a low voice.

"Yes, James."

"A telegram."

Sylvia caught her breath rather sharply.

"Did any of you girls wire? Could it have been delayed and reached here after you?" she asked, as she paused, hand outstretched, to take the telegram from the silver server.

"I didn't," declared Rose, and the others shook their heads in negation.

With fingers that trembled Sylvia tore open the yellow envelope. Her eyes rapidly scanned the few typewritten words on the sheet, and once more her breath came in a gasp.

"No bad news, I hope," said Hazel, as she glided across the room and put her arms about her chum.

"It—it isn't—good!" faltered Sylvia. "It's Roy—my brother—he—he's worse!"

A startled cry came from Rose, who turned pale, so that only a small tinted spot glowed in either cheek.

"Roy—ill!" she whispered.

CHAPTER III

PREPARATIONS

SOMETHING like a portentous influence seemed to have fallen suddenly over the little party of girls that had been making so merry but a moment before. Sylvia read the telegram again.

"Any answer, Miss Pursell?" asked the butler. "I told the boy to wait."

"No, James. At least not now. I must talk with mother. This came to me—I wonder why?"

"Perhaps your brother did not want to alarm your mother," suggested Alice.

"I suppose so—but——"

"I didn't know Roy was ill," said Rose, and there was that in her tone which showed that she had a good right to know—a right that Sylvia seemed to acknowledge, for she answered:

"We didn't write and tell you, dear, for we kept hoping that it would pass, and that he would be all right. But it hasn't, and—oh, dear!" For a moment Sylvia seemed about to give way, and Hazel tightened her clasp about her chum.

"I—I'll be all right in—in a moment," said Sylvia. "It was just—just the disappointment. I did hope he was going to get along at the sanitarium."

"Sanitarium!" fairly gasped Rose. "Is he—has he——"

"It isn't any real disease," Sylvia made haste to say.

"Why, he didn't even hint anything to me the last time he wrote," said Rose, the colour gradually coming back to her cheeks. That she and Sylvia's big brother, Roy, corresponded was no secret, since it was generally accepted that they would become engaged some day. Just now the little affair was in that most delightful of all states, one of perfect understanding.

"No, I fancy he didn't want you to know, my dear," replied Sylvia, gently. "It was, at first, just a breakdown from overwork. You know," she went on to the other girls, "after Roy graduated from Yale he was given a fine position with the Hosmore Chemical Company, here in New York.

"Roy was just in love with his work, and so enthusiastic. I fear his very enthusiasm told against him, for he had worked hard at college, and really overtrained on the football eleven. But he was getting along splendidly, until the breakdown came."

"A breakdown," murmured Rose. "He only wrote me that he was tired, and wanted a rest, but that he would not take it until he had completed his discovery."

"That's what did it—the discovery," sighed Rose. "Roy had some ideas about a new chemical combination that was destined to work wonders. It had

something to do with colouring fabrics, I believe. He told me the details, but I have forgotten."

"It was for dyeing silk," explained Rose. "You know since the European war chemicals and dye-stuffs from Germany, the centre of the trade, have been dreadfully hard to get over here. So Roy discovered a new way of utilising some of the coal-tar products, and he hoped to make a big thing of it."

"You know more than I do," said Sylvia, but there was not the least hint of sisterly jealousy in her voice. "I believe it was that, though, which Roy was working on. Well, he made his discovery——"

"How nice!" murmured Alice.

"No! It wasn't at all nice!" and Sylvia's voice took on rather a fierce and indignant tone. "For poor Roy worked so hard over it that he suffered a mental breakdown. It was complete, added to a sort of physical going to pieces, and he couldn't remember the proper chemical combination—the one he worked so hard over. It went from his mind completely and was as lost to him as though he had never worked it out during long nights of study. He tried and tried to recall it, and I suppose that did him no good, mentally or physically. Then he gave up, and broke down completely. It was terrible, but we hoped for the best. Then he went away——"

"Went away?" echoed Rose.

"Well, rather, he was sent. His firm was very nice to him, granted him a leave of absence and all that, and even sent one of their young men from

the office away with Roy. Mother wanted to go herself, but the doctor said she had better not."

"She must have felt that terribly," commented Hazel. "She was so chummy with Roy, and he with her."

"Yes," assented Sylvia. "It was terrible. But mamma saw that it was for the best. Papa simply could not leave. His business is so complicated since the war, that he fairly lives at the office. So Roy went off with Harry Montray, and he was more than kind to my brother and all of us."

"Harry Montray?" murmured Alice, questioningly.

"I don't believe you know him," Sylvia said. "He was a Stevens boy, and he and Roy were real chums. I grew to like Harry very much in the short time I knew him. He went away with my brother."

"But where?" asked Rose. "You haven't told me where yet?"

You notice she did not say "us." But the reason is not far to seek.

"Oh, I thought I mentioned it," said Sylvia. "Pardon me. Roy is at Loneberg Camp, Saranac Lake."

"Saranac Lake!" cried Rose. "Why, that's where we——"

"Yes, that's where we are going," Sylvia took up the remark. "That was one reason that made me keep to my original resolution to make the Adirondacks our first outing objective. For a time, after

we tentatively selected that, I was inclined to change to Bar Harbor, or Martha's Vineyard, but when I learned Roy had to go to the mountains for a complete rest and cure, I was glad I had not made other plans. We can see him there, and we may do him good."

"I am not so sure that, collectively, we shall help him to improve, as I am that, *individually*, we may," murmured Alice.

"What do you mean?" asked Sylvia, her eyes opening wide.

"Say, rather, *whom* do I mean," retorted Alice, nodding at Rose, who was reading the telegram Sylvia had handed her.

"Why," said Rose, not hearing, or perhaps not heeding, the remark made about herself, "this message is from that Harry Montray."

"Yes," assented Sylvia. "He is looking after Roy. He promised to wire every day as to how my brother was. Up to now Roy has been very well, considering. He showed little improvement, to be sure, and worrying over the forgotten chemical formula was not beneficial. But this is the first time we have had really unpleasant news concerning him. I suppose that is why Harry sent the wire to me. I think I must tell mother——"

"Don't!" interrupted Alice. "At least not yet awhile," she went on. "Your mother will have enough to worry about, with a house full of company, and this will only add to it. As long as it isn't danger-

ous, and as long as nothing can be done right away, wait until to-morrow to tell her, Sylvia."

"I wonder if I ought?"

"I think so," agreed Rose. "We may have better news to-morrow. If we don't, well, there will be time enough to get up there in a hurry, even if it is necessary."

"I suppose so," assented Sylvia. "Yes, I'll not say anything to her about it. I must bring her in to meet you. She is anxious to know you all, for she has heard so much about you, and she has only seen your pictures. I'll just keep the unpleasant news from her. I'll see if she is in her room," and Sylvia lost no time in stepping to the private telephone with which the large apartment was equipped.

"Will this make any change in our plans?" asked Hazel. "If it does——"

"Not in the least, my dear," answered Sylvia, as she was making the necessary connection, a central being dispensed with. "We may go a bit earlier, that is all."

"Couldn't we go direct to Saranac Lake?" asked Rose.

"We can, if we find it necessary," answered her hostess. "But it will rather spoil our plans, and can do no good, I fear. The doctor said it would take time for Roy to get strong enough physically so that his mental powers would return. But if we get any more disquieting news we will go direct to

Saranac, and not make tours and trips along the route, as I planned. Hello!" she interrupted, to speak into the telephone.

Mrs. Pursell was in her room, and said she would be in directly to meet her daughter's girl chums.

"Hadn't you better tell your butler not to mention the telegram?" suggested Rose.

"Perhaps I had," agreed Sylvia, slipping out, but returning in time to present the three girls to her mother. Mrs. Pursell greeted them warmly.

"You are all just as I pictured you," she said. "Of course I have seen your photographs. But I think I expected Hazel to be just a trifle smaller. I think she isn't such a baby!"

"Well, that's what they all call me," sighed Hazel of the brown eyes. "I wear high-heeled shoes, and everything to make me look larger, but I'm in despair of growing taller."

"Never mind, my dear," Sylvia consoled her, "you are perfectly all right and charming as you are. Mother, you will go with us to-night; will you not?"

"Where, daughter; to another dance? I think not."

"No, the theatre. I planned to have the girls see that new Shaw play."

"Oh, I adore Bernard Shaw!" exclaimed Alice. "He is so sarcastic when you least expect it. He wakes you up—like a dash of cold water in your face."

“And about as unpleasantly, at times,” commented Rose. “I like a different sort of alarm clock.”

“We can pick some other play,” Sylvia said.

“Oh, no indeed! I like Shaw. It gives you something to think about afterward, and that’s what we need nowadays.”

“Quite an idea, calling your club that,” commented Mrs. Pursell. “But don’t count on me for the theatre, daughter mine. Go and enjoy yourselves. Father will be home to dinner, so he telephoned.”

“That’s so nice of him. It’s quite a concession on father’s part to dine with us these days,” Sylvia went on. “So you girls must sufficiently express yourselves as honoured. He’ll probably lose I don’t know how many thousand dollars by being away from the office for even a little while—at least he’ll say so, anyhow,” and she laughed.

The girls went to the play, and had supper at Sherry’s afterward, Mr. Pursell allowing himself to be made a member of the merry little party, that attracted more than passing glances, for each of the four girls was distractingly pretty.

“And now to pack and pack and then pack some more,” said Sylvia, gaily, the next day. “Oh, I forgot, you girls want to see about gowns. But you won’t need such elaborate ones. A couple for dances at the hotels, and the rest—well, we’re going to rough it, rather than otherwise. Now then——”

The butler knocked and entered.

"Excuse me, Miss Pursell," he said, "but you are wanted at the telephone. It's long-distance."

"Long-distance," faltered Sylvia. At once the same thought came to all the girls—Roy—up in the Adirondack woods.

CHAPTER IV

"WATCH YOUR STEP!"

ROSE caught her breath sharply, as Sylvia swept, with a slithering of her silken skirts, to the extension telephone in the reception hall. And even as she prepared to listen and speak over the wire, the girl had a cautioning thought.

"You didn't tell mother; did you, James?" she asked, in a whisper.

"No, Miss Pursell. The message was for you."

"I know. That's right. Still I thought—— Hello!" she interrupted herself to speak into the transmitter. "Yes, this is Miss Pursell. Oh, it's you, Mr. Montray. Oh, yes, I——"

The door swung shut, closing Sylvia away from her chums, and they only heard the murmur of her voice as she talked. Rose arose and paced nervously to and from a certain window. She wondered if the message concerned her.

Presently Sylvia rejoined her friends. There was a glow on her face, a happy glint in her eyes, and something in her whole bearing that told them it was good news, and not bad, even before she spoke. Gaily she cried:

"Roy is much better!"

"Oh, I'm *so* glad!" breathed Rose, and her complexion vied with her name.

"Were you talking to him?" asked Alice, as she turned an emerald ring on her finger—an emerald that caused much wonder among strangers as to where she had obtained it, for it was a most beautiful stone. But, perhaps unromantically enough, a maternal aunt had bequeathed it to Alice.

"No, I wasn't talking to Roy, but to his friend, Harry Montray," replied Sylvia. "He said he knew we would be anxious after the telegram of yesterday, so, as he happened to be near a long-distance telephone, he called up, instead of telegraphing. He wanted to explain certain things."

"About Roy?" asked Hazel.

"Of course, Baby! What else?" Sylvia's eyes opened wide.

"Oh, I didn't know," and she tried to seem indifferent.

"But tell us the news!" begged Rose.

"That's so. Don't keep her in suspense," suggested Alice, as she held the cool emerald against her cheek, as Nero is said to have held one against his eye, perhaps better to see, or, perhaps, to make him more dissatisfied with life by imparting a green tint to the complexions of his flatterers.

"Yes, Roy is much better," went on his sister. "That little depression of the day before seemed to be but a passing nervous spell."

"But is he better—all well?" asked Hazel.

"Oh, no, indeed, and he won't be for some time. But he is in no immediate danger. Had he been, either mamma or papa would have gone up at once. What he needs is complete rest and change, and he is getting both. It is only that he cannot make his mind do what he wants it to, and bring back the memory of that forgotten chemical combination. That is what is worrying him, for there is a comparatively large fortune in it, both for himself and for his firm.

"It is too bad he lost all memory of it, but it may come back to him. Until it does, though, he will worry and fret, and that will retard his recovery, Harry says. But he is growing stronger physically, and in another month or so there may be a big change."

"That's good," murmured Alice, with a sympathetic glance at Rose.

"Perhaps when we go to see him that will at least cheer him up," said Hazel.

"I am hoping so," Sylvia agreed. "Poor Roy! he isn't having a very good time. He just loves the woods, to hunt and fish and camp, but I imagine he can't do many of those things now. Taking a rest cure is so——"

"Unrestful," put in Alice, as she caught Hazel by the shoulders and whirled her about, forcing her over toward the piano. "Come!" she cried. "Away with gloomy thoughts, since Sylvia has had good news! Let's try that new whirl in the onestep. Don't you

remember—the step backward, then forward, a halt and a whirl—this way!”

Humming to herself she glided gracefully about the room.

“Oh, if you want to dance,” said Sylvia, “let’s go out to the library and take up the rugs. We can start the ‘canned music,’ as Roy calls the phonograph, and have some good practice. But really, though I hate to begin, I ought to be packing!” and she sighed.

“And I ought to be shopping!” added Hazel. “But we’ve time enough. I am easy to fit, and not fussy. On with the dance. Come, Rose, I’ll lead you.”

But Rose rather hung back, and there was a far-off look in her eyes.

“Are you worried, dear?” asked Sylvia, in a whisper, as Alice and Hazel led the way to the library for dance practice.

“A little—yes.”

Sylvia pressed her chum’s hand.

“Don’t be,” she said. “I’m sure he will be all right.”

“I hope so. But——”

The music of a catchy onestep floated in to them, and soon the girls were gliding about the unrugged floor.

“Do the *aéroplane*,” suggested Sylvia. “You know, the one with four steps on one side, four on the other, then the walk-about and——”

"Oh, yes, I just love that. It's so restful!" cried Hazel.

The merry impromptu dance went on, and then Sylvia bethought herself that she had not given to her mother the good news that had come by telephone. When she came back, after having done this, the girls were waltzing, Alice with a large vase as a partner, while Hazel had taken Rose.

"I want to get that 'marcel wave' down more smoothly," explained Alice. "I'm sure they'll be doing that at all the hotels this summer."

They shopped that afternoon and the next and for several successive days. Rush orders were given dressmakers. The town car was in constant demand for visits to shops, and the apartment looked like "a May morning cyclone," as Sylvia expressed it, for there were gowns and hats on every chair and in every corner.

"I thought you girls were going to do this thing simply, and rough it in the mountains," said Mr. Pursell, as he "waded through" the filled-up hall one evening.

"We are, Daddy mine!" laughingly answered Sylvia.

"This doesn't look like it."

"Oh, but you know nowadays, Daddy, it's awfully hard to be simple."

"Like being good, I suppose," he chuckled. "Well, I'm glad you're going—I mean I'm sorry to lose the jolly company of you young ladies," he hast-

ened to add, "but I'm glad you're going up to see Roy. He needs it. I'd go myself only I can't possibly leave. What was the report to-day, Sylvia?"

"Just about the same. He is fretting a little."

"Well, perhaps that's a good sign. They say when a sick person frets he's getting better. Now, Sylvia, how about your trip? Have you it all planned out? When does Aunt Theodora-and-all-the-rest-of-it arrive?"

"Don't let her hear you say that!" cautioned his daughter, raising an admonishing finger. "She is very dignified at times, but jolly enough when she wants to be. She'll be with us to-morrow, and we will start two days after that. She may want to do a little shopping in New York, since she won't get to Paris this year."

"Have you the train schedule?" asked Mr. Pursell.

"All complete," replied Sylvia, tapping a bundle of time-tables and railroad folders. "We leave the Grand Central Terminal at 12:25, and we can reach Fulton Chain at 11:05 the next day; that is if we don't stop off anywhere."

"Were you thinking of that?" asked Mr. Pursell.

"I wanted them to stop off at Syracuse," put in Rose.

"And we may," half-promised Sylvia.

"Do you know any of the University fellows?" Hazel wanted to know.

"Of course she does—scores of them," declared Sylvia.

"Then we stop off," decided Alice. "That settles it!" and the others laughed at her vehemence.

Aunt Theodora Leigh Brownley arrived, and was made welcome by Mr. and Mrs. Pursell. They made the gentle, dignified Southern lady feel at home at once, and when Mrs. Brownley discovered, wholly by accident, that there was living in the same apartment a member of an old and distinguished family of Fairfax County, Virginia, the little reserve she had shown melted at once.

"I can be quite reconciled to New York, and even to these semi-barbarous apartment houses, if a Randolph can be comfortable here," said Mrs. Brownley. "It is much nicer than I thought."

Then began a busy time, with the town car working veritably night and day, taking the girls here and there, to fill engagements with dressmakers and milliners, to shop, attend teas and what not. But slowly the pile of pretty things in the various rooms was reduced. Trunks began to fill, and finally came the day when the Nowadays Club held a last informal meeting in the home of Sylvia.

"We leave to-morrow," was the announcement of the president *pro tem*. "Now don't any of you forget anything."

"Have you the tickets, Sylvia?" asked Mrs. Brownley.

"Indeed we have, Aunt Theodora."

"And you have definitely decided to stop off at Syracuse?"

"Yes, Rose wants us to, and we may not get another chance soon to meet her people."

"Very well then, my dear, I shall take my afternoon nap, something I deprive myself of when school is in session."

Aunt Theodora Leigh Brownley had a very comfortable habit of indulging in a siesta when acting as chaperon. Perhaps she emulated those paragons of chaperons, the Spanish *duennas*.

After a light and rather "flighty" lunch next day, the girls motored to the Grand Central Terminal, and even in that vast extent of station with its marble, its tiles, its hurrying, bustling throngs, its red-capped porters, and its general air of caring for nothing and no one, the girls created no little stir, as they marched in, two by two, with Aunt Theodora in the lead and several porters bringing up the rear with handbags.

"We certainly are doing it in style!" murmured Hazel, to whom attention was as the breath of life.

"Of course! Why not?" demanded Alice. "After all, there is no place just like New York for cutting a dash!"

"Well, don't cut up too much," advised Hazel.

Their train was being announced as they entered, and they passed out through the iron-grilled gates to the parlour car, which glowed with many electric lights, for it was dark out on that labyrinth of tracks.

The porters were tipped most graciously by Aunt Theodora, who received the homage of doffed caps



“WE CERTAINLY ARE DOING IT IN STYLE!” MURMURED
HAZEL

as only a Southern woman can, and then the girls settled themselves comfortably for a long ride.

"Well, we are starting," said Sylvia, with a little sigh, as a gentle motion was imparted to the long, heavy train. "We are off to the Adirondacks, girls."

"And I wonder what we shall find there?" murmured Alice.

"Find? What do you mean?" asked Hazel.

"Oh, I don't know—exactly."

"I hope we find Roy better," voiced Sylvia.

"So do I," echoed Rose. But she smiled, for the early morning telegram, in the form of a night-letter this time, had brought good news ere they had left for the station.

But though Rose smiled, somehow, and in a manner for which she could not account, she had a feeling of vague apprehension. And that this apprehension had to do with Roy need not be doubted. It was a feeling as though "something were going to happen," as we often tell ourselves. That was as much of it as Rose could define.

But she managed to shake off a little of the feeling as the train came out of the gloomy line of tunnel-walls and, beyond One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, emerged into the open. True there was not much to see, but it was better than nothing, or the stone walls.

Hazel went to the end of the swaying car for a drink of water—a thirst having been engendered by an indulgence in candy—and on her way back a

sudden swaying of the coach threw her off her balance.

“Watch your step!” called out a young man, near whose chair she was struggling. Hazel tried to, but could not, and the next moment she was neatly deposited on the arm of—not the young man, but the arm of the chair in which he sat. He put up his hand to Hazel’s back to prevent her toppling completely over, murmuring again:

“Watch your step!”

CHAPTER V

IN SYRACUSE

"BEG your pardon! Hope you're not hurt?"

It was the young man standing before Hazel, and bowing as he assisted her in getting to her feet from her seat on the arm of his chair.

"I beg—*your* pardon," murmured Hazel, her face suffused with the blushes that she could not keep back.

"It was—it was——"

"I know, the train! They run a bit unevenly at times with these electric locomotives. Perfectly excusable. Are you sure you're not hurt—sprained ankle, or anything like that?" he asked, anxiously.

"Of course not," murmured Baby. She could see a changed look come over the young man's face. He had taken her for a little girl, and he had found on looking into her eyes that she could not be so classed, though she was "Baby."

By this time Aunt Theodora had become aware of the little accident and was walking down the aisle.

"Is anything——" she began.

"Nothing at all!" cried Hazel, quickly, and she gently disengaged her hand from the rather too warm and ardent one of the young man. He had taken her hand in assisting her to arise, and he seemed very

willing to repeat the ceremony. But Hazel knew how to put up the barriers, though she smiled innocently enough at the youth.

"Why—why!" began Aunt Theodora, and Sylvia began to fear that something unpleasant was about to transpire. But certainly it was not Hazel's fault that a lurch of the train nearly threw her into the grasp of a good-looking young man. And he had behaved very nicely about it, too. All the girls agreed on that point when they talked the matter over among themselves afterward.

"It's Jack Benton, isn't it?" demanded Aunt Theodora, as she extended her hand to the young man in question.

Hazel gasped. This was condescension indeed on the part of their chaperon. But, somehow or other, Hazel was very glad. She had evidently "fallen in" with one of Aunt Theodora's acquaintances, and, in spite of her rather conservative ways, Mrs. Brownley was quite cosmopolitan in many respects, and had numerous acquaintances in various queer corners of the earth.

"I'm Jack Benton—yes'm," and he clipped the last word with just the proper accent to prevent it degenerating broadly into "ma'am."

"You don't know me, but your sister Ruth——"

"Oh, of course—Miss Stevenson's school—you're Mrs. Brownley—I met you at the commencement. But—er—I didn't know you with your hat on, I suppose—at least, that is—I—er——"

"Poor fellow!" murmured Sylvia, trying her best not to laugh, for Jack was certainly embarrassed and making a "mess of it."

"Is this—er—your——?" Clearly he was at a loss how to classify Hazel. And she, little minx that she was, said not a word to give him an inkling. She might, indeed, have been Mrs. Brownley's daughter or granddaughter.

"But how could I speak, except to say 'beg pardon!' when I hadn't been introduced?" Hazel asked the girls afterward.

"You couldn't of course—not with Aunt Theodora there," was the decision of Alice, after a long discussion of the point in question, and you may be sure the girls missed nothing in discussing the matter from all its angles.

"Sylvia—Hazel—all of you—you must remember Ruth Benton," said Mrs. Brownley. "And to think of meeting you here. Is your sister with you?"

"No, I am travelling alone, though I expect a party of friends to meet me at Albany. Some Yale fellows and I are going on a little trip up-state."

"How nice! I'm so glad to meet you again, Jack. These are some of my girls. They know your sister slightly, though they were not in her class. Sylvia—Miss Pursell—this is Jack Benton—Miss Hazel Reed——"

"We have met before," and Jack, of the laughing eyes, smiled at Hazel of the brown orbs. The others were presented.

"I wonder if we are to call him Jack?" murmured Sylvia.

"I wish you would!" he said, quickly.

She blushed vividly—not thinking he had heard her.

"It's so much nicer," he went on. "Please, Mrs. Brownley—Aunt Theodora—tell them to!"

"To what, Jack?" The chaperon had been speaking to one of the porters about getting her a has-sock.

"Tell them to call me Jack. Let's not be conventional—at least not on this trip. Let's pretend it's a sea-voyage, and that this is a steamer. You know," he went on, speaking to Hazel, but for the benefit of all, "that acquaintances on shipboard don't count for anything—that is, I don't mean that—I—er—I mean—oh, call me Jack!" he finished, as the only way out of the tangle.

"I don't see why they shouldn't," declared Aunt Theodora. "I intend to call you that, as I call your sister Ruth. The young ladies have my permission. Won't you join us in a cup of tea? We had a very early lunch."

Jack winced a little at the mention of tea. Sylvia could see that, and it became another subject for discussion later.

"Delighted, I'm sure," he, however, murmured submissively.

"They're going to put up one of the little tables near our chairs," went on Mrs. Brownley. "You

can move down there. The car isn't crowded, and there are some vacant places near us."

"Of course," he assented. "Then it's to be Jack—and—er—Hazel?" he ventured, with another laughing-eyed glance at her.

"I—I suppose so," she murmured, though she did not seem much abashed.

"That's what Chicago will do for one," said Sylvia afterward.

"Oh, it's nothing of the sort!" cried Hazel, defending herself.

But they all ended by calling him Jack, and he addressed them by their first names. After all they were but girls and a boy.

"Very nice people," said Mrs. Brownley, in an aside to Sylvia. "I have visited them. Very cultured and all that. Nice to know."

Sylvia was sure of it, as she glanced at Jack. He was a clean-cut youth, with perfect even and white teeth that made his smile most charming.

Soon they were merrily gathered about the tea table, sipping the fragrant beverage, and nibbling toast and cakes. The girls had better appetites than Jack Benton evinced, but then they had been so excited at the prospect of starting that they had done little justice to the early luncheon Mrs. Pursell had had prepared for them.

"You certainly have a fine trip ahead of you," Jack said, when the objective of the Nowadays Girls had been revealed to him. "I was up in the Adiron-

dacks last fall, hunting, and it was delightful then. It must be more so now, with the lakes, the fishing, the boating and all that. Wish I were going along."

"Yes, it would be nice," murmured Hazel.

"I suppose you think he'll be there to pick you up every time you stumble on the trail," whispered Alice.

Hazel did not answer, save by a look.

At Albany a group of college boys joined Jack. He introduced them to his new friends, and there was a merry party that enlivened the coach for part of the remaining distance.

The boys left the party at Herkimer, and there was where the girls would have gone on to their trip to the Adirondacks had not they voted to visit Rose at Syracuse. I have spoken of "stopping off" at the Salt City, but it really was a going on, since they would have to come back to get on the railroad line that would take them to Fulton Chain.

But they were in no haste, and, as Sylvia said, they might not be up that way again, so it was only fair to take advantage of this opportunity of stopping at the home of Rose.

"I hope I see you all again," Jack Benton had said, on leaving the party, but, though he included all, he had looked last at Hazel, and had shaken hands with her finally.

The girls, naturally, teased her about this afterward. But she only said:

"I don't care! He was awfully nice!"

And that was her only excuse.

Slowly the train rolled through the streets of Syracuse. Slowly because there were so many grade crossings, and then came a whirling taxicab trip to the home of Rose, where a warm welcome was extended to the Nowadays Girls.

They remained in Syracuse for a week, paying a visit out to the salt works, where the brine is pumped up from the depths of the earth, spread out in shallow vats to be evaporated, leaving behind the saline crystals which, after being treated, to clarify them, are ready for the market. The girls secured some of the peculiar, brown crystals left in the bottoms of the kettles. Sawed into blocks, they made odd and excellent paper weights.

It was a round of gaiety in Syracuse, for the University had not yet closed, and Rose knew many young people. So they had all the dances they wished for, with teas, theatre parties and other like forms of entertainment.

“And now really for the Adirondacks!” exclaimed Sylvia, when they were again ready to make a start. She had received word that her brother was doing as well as could be expected, though his fretfulness over his inability to recall the chemical secret was having no very good effect.

CHAPTER VI

THE MISSING EMERALD

THE NOWADAYS GIRLS arrived at Fulton Chain at 11:05 in the morning, and stopped for lunch in a little restaurant before taking the branch train that went to Old Forge. Their trip had been a pleasant one, though a trifle tiresome toward the end. But already they were beginning to feel the invigorating mountain air, and it seemed to bring new life to them.

They had been mounting steadily upward, and now were about eighteen hundred feet above sea level. All about them, save for the little settlements, and the open spaces where the blue-tinted lakes broke the continuity, was the vast forest.

"Oh, can't you just smell the balsam!" cried Sylvia, as she breathed in deep of the sweetly scented air.

"They say it makes one sleep," said Rose. "But who would want to sleep up here?"

"No one," assented Hazel. "I just want to get out in the woods, or in a boat, and *live!*"

"It is glorious!" declared Alice. "Just perfectly glorious!"

From Fulton Chain a little railroad ran the two miles, more or less, to Old Forge. This was a village

with a summer population of about two thousand, and it was more up-to-date than the girls had expected to find it. The stores were well stocked, and they learned that there was an ever-increasing trade with summer campers and hotel folk. All about the vicinity were many small lakes, the restaurant keeper told the girls, and on the shores were many camping parties. There would be more as the season advanced.

"What are we going to do when we get to Old Forge?" asked Rose.

"Well, that's where we can have a choice of doing several things," Sylvia explained. "You know Old Forge is the gateway, so to speak, to eight small lakes, and they are numbered instead of being named. We can go by canoe or guide-boat, through the eight lakes to Raquette, and so on, travelling any way that suits us, to Saranac. What do you say to canoeing and carrying?"

"The canoeing sounds all right, but what is this carrying?" asked Hazel. "Is it carrying-on?"

"That means you have to carry your canoe," answered Sylvia, with a laugh.

"Why can't you ride in it?"

"Because there isn't any water."

"But you just said there were eight lakes——"

"I know, but look here!" Sylvia spread out a railroad map on the now cleared restaurant table.

"This is how it is," Sylvia explained, for she had made a study of it before proposing the Adirondack trip. "From Old Forge, where we'll go soon, and

spend the night, we can canoe through the first four lakes, which are in a sort of chain—like beads, I suppose. Or we can go on a steamer, or in a guide-boat?"

"What's a guide-boat?" asked Rose.

"A boat with a guide in it, of course," declared Hazel.

"Not exactly," explained Sylvia. "It's a sort of boat designed by the guides up here. It's a little safer than a canoe, but almost as light, and you can row it or paddle it, and it will stand pretty rough water."

"Well, that sounds interesting," observed Alice. "I'm rather inclined to a guide-boat myself."

"The steamer seems rather attractive," suggested Mrs. Brownley, "but you girls do just as you please. I've been in gondolas on the Grand Canal of Venice, and I'm not going to hold back when it comes to an Adirondack guide-boat!"

"Suppose we leave that question until we get to Old Forge, and look the ground—or, rather, the water—over," suggested Sylvia.

"Good!" assented Hazel.

"It's twelve miles through the first four lakes," went on Sylvia, "and a steamer doesn't seem necessary. Then, after we get to the end of the fourth lake there is a carry of one mile to the sixth lake."

"Just what is a carry?" asked Rose.

"It's where you have to carry your boat, and everything in it, over dry land, from one body of water to another," said Sylvia.

"Do they actually carry the boats—I mean—would *we* have to?" Hazel wanted to know.

"We wouldn't. The guides, or boatmen, would do that, and they'd carry all our luggage," Sylvia explained. "That's why they use canoes, and very light boats, so they can easily be transported over the land trails. Well, as I said, it's a one-mile carry from the fourth to the sixth lake."

"My, she's a regular guide-book," mocked Alice.

"What about the fifth lake?" asked Rose.

"The carry is around that. It's winding and twisting, and one can make better time going on land. Besides, that little lake may be filled with stumps—and alligators—for all I know."

"Alligators—ugh!" exclaimed Hazel.

"Nonsense! No alligators up here," laughed Rose. "This isn't the Everglades of Florida."

"Go on. What else, Sylvia?" asked Alice.

"Well, you canoe, or boat, through lakes six and seven, and then comes another mile carry to lake eight, and when you get to the end of that you're ready to——"

"Have supper and go to bed," finished Hazel, with a laugh.

"Perhaps," admitted Sylvia. "Anyhow, from the eighth lake to Brown's Tract Inlet, which is the southern end of Raquette, is a carry of a mile and a half."

"Going up!" called Alice, in imitation of an elevator boy.

"Well, that's the last carry for some time," said Sylvia.

"Thank goodness! It makes one tired to think of the poor men carting those boats on their shoulders," cried Hazel.

"Well, now we're supposed to be on Raquette Lake," went on Sylvia, "and that is quite a body of water. The book says there are brook trout, lake trout, whitefish and bass in those waters, but I think they're not all in season now."

"I didn't know fish had seasons, like oysters," murmured Alice.

"Oh, indeed they do," Sylvia declared, "and we must be true sporting girls, and observe the game laws, too, if we do any fishing. If we don't, well, we may be arrested, that's all."

"I'll let the guide do my fishing," murmured Alice, with a look at her slim, white hands, which were set off wonderfully well by the shimmering green emerald.

"Now that's the programme for the first part of our trip," resumed Sylvia. "We can make the lake journey in a day, if we want to, or we can stop off here and there as suits our fancy. We want to get the best possible fun out of this vacation, so I think it's nice not to have any set schedule, except as to where we are going to spend the night."

"Yes, it is always best to arrange for that in advance," agreed Mrs. Brownley. "I wouldn't want any of you to be sleeping out in an open camp in

these woods at night. We must bow to some of the conventions, even if you are Nowadays Girls," she added.

They telephoned from Fulton Chain to the inn at Old Forge, and managed to engage rooms. On the little short line of railroad they made the trip, arriving late in the afternoon, and going direct to the hotel. Then, while waiting for supper, they went out to look at the lake, at the end of which is located the quaint and pretty village.

"Oh, it is just perfect here, just perfect," murmured Sylvia. "Aren't all you girls glad you came?"

"Aren't we, though—just!" cried Alice.

"It was sweet of you to think all this out for us," said Hazel.

"Oh, I'm enjoying it as much as you, if not more," was Sylvia's rejoinder. "What's the matter, Rose? Why aren't you talking?" she asked, in lower tones, for Rose was looking silently out over the placid lake. "I imagine we are thinking of the same thing," went on Roy's sister. "Never mind; we'll see him soon."

"I hope so," was the low-voiced answer.

There was to be a public dance at the hotel that night, as a number of summer tourists and campers had arrived on the same train with the girls. Among them were several young men who looked with eager, but perfectly respectful, eyes at the girls.

"I'm sure they can dance," sighed Hazel, "and

I do so want a good partner. I wonder if there isn't a public introducer here!"

"Hazel Reed!" gasped Rose.

"That's perfectly proper nowadays," protested the Chicago girl. "It's done all the while, especially during the summer. I'm going to ask Mrs. Brownley."

Aunt Theodora considered the matter from several angles, and, after a talk with the hotel proprietor and his wife, decided that the girls might properly meet the young men. They were well known to the hotel-keeper, and many others present, having been at the same camp for a number of years in succession.

And so with little, delightful flutters of excitement and anticipation, the girls opened their trunks and laid out some simple evening frocks for the dance, which was to be semi-formal.

"Oh, they're playing that lovely Cecile hesitation," murmured Hazel, as she and the others "floated" down to the ballroom, the dining-room having been cleared for the occasion.

The girls found their young men partners no less eager than they themselves, and soon the room presented a merry spectacle. It was the first large hop of the season, rather marking the official opening, in a measure, and the music was particularly good, for the musicians were some college boys who had thus started to earn vacation money to help pay their expenses.

"Oh, isn't it lovely!" whispered Alice, during an interval in the dance.

"Perfectly splendid!" echoed Sylvia. "Have you a good partner?"

"Oh, he dances like a dream!"

"Be careful you don't awaken and find it a nightmare."

"No danger. Oh, look! He's bringing some one up to introduce him, I do believe. I don't care so much for him," and she indicated the youth, who was approaching with her partner.

"Allow me," murmured George Watson, with whom Alice had been dancing, and he presented another youth, who at once asked for a dance, and was not refused, as Alice's partner had asked to take out Sylvia for the next fox trot.

Alice's dislike of her newer acquaintance increased as the dance went on. He was a good dancer, but he talked too much, and asked too many questions, not altogether conventional. And he held Alice's hand in too firm a grasp. She tried to impress her dislike on him without voicing it in so many words, but he would not take a hint.

"That was fine!" he exclaimed, as they stood together in the middle of the room, and applauded for an encore. "Wasn't it?" and he looked rather too boldly into her eyes.

"The music is very nice—yes," she assented, a bit coldly. Then the strains began again, and they danced off.

It was when Alice went with Sylvia to get a glass of lemonade, after the sixth dance, that she made a discovery.

"Oh, my emerald ring!" she exclaimed, looking hastily down at the floor. "It's gone—it isn't on my finger!"

"Are you sure you wore it downstairs?" asked Sylvia, knowing what a commotion a report of anything valuable being lost occasions at a hotel, and how much suspicion is cast thereby.

"Of course I had it. I remember that Mr. Watson remarked upon it, and when I danced with the fellow he introduced—I think his name was Tupson—the ring really hurt my hand, he squeezed it so!"

"Oh, Alice!"

"Well, he did! But my lovely emerald is gone, and it's worth I don't know how much! I must speak to the proprietor right away."

"Tell Aunt Theodora first," suggested Sylvia. "But make sure it hasn't slipped off into your glass of lemonade, or fallen into a fold of your dress. Was the ring loose enough to come off easily?"

"Yes, too easily. My fingers seem to have shrunk, lately. I intended to have the ring made smaller. But now it's gone. Oh, dear!" and there were traces of tears in her eyes.

CHAPTER VII

OVERBOARD

THERE was a hurried search in the room where the girls then were, a search that extended even to the pitcher of lemonade. But the gleaming emerald was not found. Alice was becoming more and more upset every moment, for, while the ring was hers, it was a very valuable one and she knew her family would be most distressed at its loss.

"Oh, it must be found!" the girl cried.

Her chums were with her now. There was a little lull in the dance, and refreshments were being sought.

"Whom were you with when you missed it?" asked Sylvia.

"I wasn't with any one exactly when I missed it, but I was dancing with that Tupson fellow just before," and she related to Hazel and Rose what she had previously told Sylvia.

"We must tell Aunt Theodora at once," was the decision the three girls reached for Alice, since she was too nervous to decide for herself.

Mrs. Brownley raised her eyebrows in surprise when told of the circumstance. She did not say, as she well might have done, at least in her own opinion, that Alice should not have worn the ring in the first

place to a public dance, and in the second, she ought not to have danced with a young fellow to whom she had taken a dislike.

But that was over and done with. The matter now uppermost was how to recover the jewel, and that at the least cost of embarrassment.

"You don't dare ask him baldly whether he saw it, or felt it slip from your finger," said Hazel.

"No-o-o-o," replied Alice, slowly, her eyes roving about the floor as if she might see in some nook or corner the golden circlet with its wonderful green stone.

"We must speak to the proprietor about it, and have him make an announcement," decided Mrs. Brownley. "He can do that without giving offence to any one. He can say that a valuable ring has been lost—dropped, if you like—on the dancing floor. No one can be offended at that, not even the servants, and they are very quick to take umbrage at the slightest imputation on their characters."

"That's very true," agreed Alice. "Yes, an announcement of that kind can do no harm. Oh, isn't it horrid! And there's a lovely onestep starting now," and in spite of her distress she could not refrain from humming some of the airs in the medley the musicians were then playing.

"You girls stay here, and leave this to me," said Aunt Theodora. "I'll speak to the proprietor," and she went out in her most majestic manner, fairly sweeping her way along.

The music stopped with a crash, and the dancers out on the waxen floor looked wonderingly one at the other.

"What is it?" was on the lips of all.

The Nowadays Girls looked out from the little room where they had been refreshing themselves with lemonade. They saw the hotel proprietor advance to the middle of the floor, and at once an excited whisper ran around.

"They think he's going to stop the dancing, because—well perhaps because it is too 'advanced' for this wilderness," whispered Hazel.

"Listen!" urged Rose.

The announcement was made, with the request that if the ring were found it be left at the hotel office. Then the music began once more, and the dancing was resumed.

"Come on, Alice, aren't you going out again?" asked Rose, for Alice sat down in a chair, her face having lost all its brightness.

"Oh, I don't feel a bit like dancing. I must find my ring!"

The other girls were out on the floor now, near the doorway of the little refreshment room. A group of young men, who had been telling their companions what wonderful dancers our friends were, came fairly swarming up to claim partners. Among them was young Tupson, and there was an eager look on his face.

"I say, Miss Harrow!" he began, catching sight

of Alice in spite of her effort to draw back, "whose ring was lost? Not yours, I hope? Not that one with the green stone?"

"Yes, that's the one," she answered. She almost hated herself for the ugly suspicion that came unbidden into her mind.

"Why, I saw that on your finger just before we danced the last encore," he said. "I'm sure you had it on then."

"Yes, I know I had it," Alice said, "but now it's gone."

"Oh, I say now, that's too bad! We fellows will help you look for it. I say Watson, Craig—let's organise a searching party!"

"We can look while we're dancing; can't we?" suggested the youth who had been whirling about with Rose. He liked her style and was anxious for another turn on the excellent floor.

"It will be best to look when the dancers are off," said Sylvia. "Besides, the ring might be stepped on, and how hard are emeralds, anyhow?" she asked, generally. "Are they as hard as diamonds, so they can be stepped on with impunity?"

"Oh, I shouldn't want my ring stepped on!" gasped Alice.

"I should say *not!*" chimed in Tupson. His was not a personality that attracted any of the girls. It was what, slangily, might be called "fresh," yet he seemed anxious to do all he could, and he totally ignored the suspicion that might have attached to

him, since he, admittedly, was the last one to be with Alice before the ring was missed.

"I'll tell you what we ought to do, fellows," he went on. "Ask every one to get off the floor for a while—the dancers, musicians, servants, every one. Then we'll organise a committee, get brooms and sweep the place. That ought to find the ring if it's here."

"That's the idea!" declared his friend Watson.

"It would be most excellent, I think," said Mrs. Brownley. "If it can be done——"

"I'll see to it," went on Tupson, who seemed to have plenty of assurance. He hurried over to the proprietor, talked with him a few minutes, and the latter made another announcement. The floor was to be cleared to allow a search for the ring, in order that it might not be stepped on.

A little later the corps of young fellows, armed with brooms, were carefully going over the dancing-floor, while, from the porch outside, and from adjoining rooms and halls, the dancers watched.

But the ring was not found, and Alice had much ado to keep from falling the tears that brimmed into her eyes. The dance was resumed, though a little spirit of depression seemed to have settled over it.

"Aren't you going out again?" asked Rose of Alice, when the former came to a chair to rest after a rather strenuous fox trot.

"I wasn't—no—yes, I am, too! I'm going to be game! I'm not going to let them see that I care.

After all, it isn't so much the value of the ring, as the associations connected with it. Mamma will feel dreadfully, of course, but father couldn't bear emeralds. I loved it, though, it was so quaint, and——"

"It matched your hand so well," added Hazel.

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of that," Alice said.

And she did go out again and dance, not heeding the many eyes that followed her, for it was whispered about that she was the owner of the lost ring, and its value mounted by hundreds (in gossipy dollars) until it was said to be worth a king's ransom.

Furtive looks were cast at the dancing-floor the rest of the evening, but the emerald was not discovered, and Alice was again rather in the "dumps" when she and her girl chums went to their rooms.

"Well, there's one thing sure," decided Sylvia, "we won't go on with our trip to-morrow. I'll cancel that order for canoes and guide-boats. We'll stay here a few days."

"Why?" asked Rose.

"Until we see if we can't find Alice's ring," was the answer. "It may come back in some mysterious way. Jewels lost in hotels have a way of doing that if you make fuss enough over them."

"I was going to say that I would like to stay over," remarked Alice, "but I didn't like to propose it, and keep you all back."

"It will not be any great hardship," Sylvia said. "It is lovely here, as it is all over the Adirondacks,

and we can play golf and canoe here for a day or so, and have all the fun possible. I'll just tell the men we engaged that we have postponed our trip for a week, perhaps less."

"I'm so sorry," began Alice.

"You needn't be," Hazel declared. "This is a lovely dancing-floor."

"And there is a nice golf course not far away," Rose added. "I can keep up my game."

"Stay, by all means," agreed Mrs. Brownley. "You are out for pleasure, and half of that consists in doing things when you want to, not when you have to. And I do hope you find your ring, Alice."

The girls were sitting in the private parlour, with which their rooms were all connected, hair down, in comfortable dressing-gowns, discussing a thousand and one things just before retiring for the night, when there came a knock on the door.

"Who is it?" asked Mrs. Brownley.

"The chambermaid. The lost ring has been found!" was the reply.

Electrified, the girls fairly jumped to their feet.

"My ring found? Where? Oh, where is it?" Alice cried.

"The proprietor has it down in the office," came from the voice on the other side of the door.

"Oh—I——" Alice began.

"I'll get it," said the chaperon. She had not yet made herself "comfortable," and was soon following the maid down to the main office. There a much-

relieved proprietor exhibited the wonderful emerald ring.

"Yes, that is it," Mrs. Brownley said, for she knew Alice's jewel well. "Who had it?"

"No one, Mrs. Brownley. That is, the one who had it didn't know he had it," and the hotel man smiled.

"What do you mean, sir?" and the Southern lady rather drew herself up in wounded dignity.

"Why, it was this way. The young fellow with whom Miss Harrow was dancing wore his trousers turned up at the bottom, in a style the young men affect nowadays. Well, it seems the ring was found in the folded-up part of his trousers. It fell out on the floor when he went to his room, and he brought it here at once."

"Why, isn't that remarkable!" exclaimed Mrs. Brownley. "I have heard of such things, but have never experienced them. But we are very glad to get back the ring."

"And I'm glad you have it," the hotel man agreed. "I'll sleep better to-night."

Mrs. Brownley hurried back to the girls, who were anxiously waiting for her, the ring and the explanation.

"Did you ever!" exclaimed Rose.

"How interesting!" was Hazel's contribution.

"Just like a story or a play," added Sylvia.

"I don't care how or what it was, as long as I have my ring back!" Alice said. "And I can very

well understand how it happened. The ring slipped from my finger and lodged in the gaping, upturned fold of his trousers. It is lucky it didn't fall to the floor, to be stepped on. Oh, I'm *so* glad you came back to me!" and she kissed the green stone before she slipped the golden circlet onto her slim finger.

"Well, don't lose it again, please," begged Aunt Theodora.

"I won't wear it while we're up here in the woods," Alice promised.

Young Tupper sought the earliest opportunity next morning to speak to Alice. He described how he had found the ring.

"And I say!" he exclaimed, boyishly, eagerly, "I hope you don't think I did it on purpose?"

"On purpose?" echoed Alice, her cheeks getting warm under his gaze.

"Yes, for a joke, you know."

"Oh, certainly not!" and Alice gave unnecessary emphasis to the words.

"Then you'll forgive me?"

"Of course! There's really nothing to forgive."

"Well, I'm glad of that. I say now, I hear you girls are to stay here for some time longer."

"Well, we were going to, on account of my lost ring, but now it has been found——"

"Oh, don't say that, or I'll be sorry I gave it back to you," he laughed. "But I saw some of the guides, and they told me the men you had engaged to take you through Fulton Chain had been disengaged, and

had taken another party up. So that meant you would stay, and——”

“I’m not at all sure what we shall do,” said Alice, evasively. She wished some of her chums would come along, but Tupson had her alone in one corner of the big veranda.

“Well, if you do stay, even to-day, won’t you let me take you out in my canoe?” he pleaded. “I have a large one. It’s perfectly safe.”

“I—I’ll see,” Alice gasped. “Oh, Sylvia!” she called, pretending she had seen her chum at the hall entrance, and she fled with a rustle of skirts.

There was a little conference of the Nowadays Girls that morning. Sylvia had carried out her half-formed plan of the night before, and dismissed the boatmen for an indefinite time. So the travellers decided to remain at least a few days at Old Forge, and see the surrounding country.

“Then there’s no reason why Alice can’t have her canoe ride,” said Hazel. “We all know how she is pining for one.”

“Baby, if you——!” began the annoyed one.

“Oh, well, I don’t mind admitting that I have an invitation also,” drawled Hazel. “Now let’s hear from the others.”

It developed that each girl had been asked by her dancing partner of the night before to come for a canoe ride on the first of the six lakes that morning, and, with Mrs. Brownley’s consent, they prepared to go.

It was a glorious day, and when the girls were comfortably seated in the much-cushioned canoes, afloat on the blue waters of the lake, with the forests and low mountains stretching off on either side, it seemed that they had begun to spend a most ideal vacation.

The canoeists were to keep together in a little flotilla, and proceed up First Lake for a short distance, go ashore and have a little lunch.

"Am I completely forgiven?" asked Tupson, of Alice, as he poised his dripping paddle.

"Of course," she said, a trifle coldly. She did not want to encourage him too much, even though he was a good dancer.

The little party indulged in quips and merry jests, shooting them back and forth from canoe to canoe, as they advanced. They were skirting the wooded shore when Sylvia proposed that they cross to the other side, where she had been told there was a spring of refreshing water.

Headed by the canoe in which were Alice and young Tupson, the little flotilla was paddling diagonally across the body of water, when there came down it a big canoe, propelled by a number of young men, who seemed to be training for some aquatic event. The water bubbled and boiled at the bow of their craft.

"Look out for them!" called the youth with Sylvia. "They are regular speed-maniacs!"

"Give them plenty of room," urged Hazel.

Just as the big canoe came opposite that containing Tupson and Alice, one of the paddles in the racing boat broke. The youth who had been wielding it pitched forward. The canoe slewed to one side, and shooting off its course, headed straight for the craft in which sat Alice.

“Look out!” cried many voices.

Tupson tried desperately to do so, but there was not time.

An instant later his canoe tipped over, spilling both him and Alice into the lake.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOLF BALL

"GIRL overboard!"

"Man overboard!"

"Back water there! Around with the boat!"

Thus came the cries from the big racing canoe. If the young men in it, through their eager desire for speed, had been the cause of the accident, they were at least willing and ready to do all they could to remedy it.

And they were in the best position for so doing, since they were nearest the scene. Their big craft glided to the spot where the canoe floated bottom upward, and there came a sharp command from the youth in the bow.

"Harris—Wing—get ready to dive!" he commanded curtly. "The rest of you hold her steady."

The eight young men in the racing canoe were all in their bathing suits, and in an instant two of them stood poised and ready.

"There she is! The fellow, too! In you go!" commanded the self-constituted leader.

Two lithe figures, their arms and legs already bronzed by the early summer sun, went down in clean dives, with hardly a splash. At the same instant

there were two spots where a commotion in the water showed the presence of Alice and Tupson, coming up after their first immersion.

Now Alice was a good swimmer—in fact all the Nowadays Girls were—and she had held her breath as she felt the waters closing over her. And when she struck out and came to the surface she was ready for the next move in the emergency.

But even a good swimmer is hampered by wet and clinging clothing, particularly a girl or woman, and Alice felt a momentary fear, that passed almost as soon as formed, for she saw a bronze-faced young man striking out to aid her.

“Put your hand on my shoulder,” he advised her, in calm, even tones.

“Oh, I—I can swim all right,” Alice assured him. She did not want him to think that she would frantically clutch him about the neck, or do any of those things that persons, unable to swim, are apt to do when they fall into the water and see a rescuer coming. “I can swim,” she repeated, “it is only that my skirts are so wet and clinging.”

“I understand,” he said. “You’re all right!”

“Is he—he?” asked Alice, and then she had to turn her face away from a little wave that splashed up at her. The other canoes, with their frightened occupants, were drawing near.

“Your friend is being taken care of,” her rescuer said. “He doesn’t seem to be able to swim as well as you.”

"Oh, I do hope you will save him!" she cried, at the same time thinking how strange it sounded to hear Tupson spoken of as her "friend."

"He'll be all right. Wing has him safe, and Wing knows how to handle his kind. Now shall we right your canoe, or will you come in ours?"

"It looks to be easier to get into yours."

"Yes, it's much larger and steadier. Over this way."

He guided her, keeping her up by placing one of her hands on his shoulder. Alice could feel the strong, rhythmic ripple of his muscles as he struck out for the big canoe, not far away.

"Lift her in!" commanded the youth in the bow.

"If you don't mind," Alice said, calmly, for she had full control of herself now, "I'll just hold on to the stern and let you paddle over toward the shore. I'm not a bit cold, and it isn't far."

"Well, just as you like," assented the leader. He divined her reason for not wanting to clamber into a boat, all dripping wet as she was, when the boat was filled with eager-eyed young fellows.

"Wing has his man—guess he had to hit him," some one said.

Alice, clinging to the stern of the big canoe, saw another bronzed swimmer approaching, supporting on one arm the limp form of her former companion.

"Oh, I hope he isn't hurt," she gasped, in much anxiety.

"Don't worry," her own rescuer said. "Wing

has served as a lifeguard at Atlantic City. He knows what to do."

Tupson was not much stunned by the blow Wing had been obliged to deal him to prevent the frantic clutch that might have meant a death-hold for both of them. A little later Tupson was hoisted into the big canoe, which was paddled ashore, towing Alice and Harris, who stoutly insisted on remaining near her.

Very much bedraggled, and not a little embarrassed, Alice was helped on shore near a small summer cottage, the owner of which at once sent his wife to look after the unfortunate one. Alice was taken to the house, her companions following. Tupson soon recovered, and was not a little ashamed of himself.

But the fault lay with the broken paddle of the big canoe, and while that was an accident, it might not have occurred had not the boys been speeding in their craft. They expressed their regret and did all they could, bringing ashore the overturned canoe, righting it and putting it in the sun where it would dry.

Meanwhile Alice was being provided with an outfit of dry garments by the owner of the cottage, and a messenger was despatched to the hotel, not far away, for some of her own clothes. Reassuring word was also sent to Mrs. Brownley, for fear she would hear an exaggerated report of the accident and worry unnecessarily.

"And now that I'm clothed, and in my right mind, let's continue the trip," suggested Alice.

"Do you mean it?" asked one of the boys who, with Tupson, formed the escort of the Nowadays Girls.

"Mean it? Of course I mean it! Why not? I'm all right, and if Mr. Tupson——"

"Oh, I'm game!" he declared. "I'm ashamed of not behaving better in the water, but I lost my head. I was worried about you," he said to Alice.

"Thank you," she graciously replied. "Then let's go on."

Tupson was sufficiently dried out, and the trip was resumed. Fortunately the lunch was not in the overturned canoe, and the impromptu picnic was successfully carried out.

The little accident provided a fruitful subject for conversation at the hotel that afternoon, when the porch was filled with animated rocking-chairs and their gossipy occupants. The girls were rather the heroines of the occasion, especially Alice, and she was formally waited upon by the eight canoeists, who said they regretted that their desire for speed had caused annoyance to any one. Their apologies were graciously accepted.

"How much longer are we going to stay here?" asked Rose that night.

"Getting anxious to get to Saranac?" questioned Hazel.

"Well,—yes," was the frank answer. "But if

we are going to stay another day or so, I'm going in for a bit of golf. I can borrow a set of clubs here, and the links are good, though rather small."

"Have a game, by all means, if you like," assented Sylvia. "We'll make up a foursome, I'll take Rose."

"How nicely she says it!" laughed Alice. "Very well, we're not to be frightened; are we, Hazel? Are you in form?"

"Oh, we'll accept the challenge. Let's go out and have a look at the course."

They found it a fairly good one, and a game was soon arranged.

"My! Look at those girls!" exclaimed an elderly lady on the hotel porch, as she saw the four departing with caddies at their side, carrying the bags.

"What's the matter with them?" some one asked.

"Why, the things they do—first they're dancing, then they're canoeing—and incidentally upsetting, next they're off golfing. I wouldn't be surprised to see them in an aëroplane next."

"Nor I," assented her companion. "They certainly are up-to-date girls. But they are delightful, and they are real girls, not powdery imitations."

"Humph! The cat!" exclaimed a tall, willowy young lady who overheard this. She kept very much in the shade, and her nose looked as though she had dipped it into a flour barrel and then forgotten to take it out.

"Fore!" called Rose, who led off in the golf game.

She grasped her driver firmly, settled herself on the bare, clay-covered tee, and drove off with all her force.

“Crack!” went her driver against the white ball.

“Oh, Rose!” cried Sylvia. But it was too late.

Across behind a bunker, toward which Rose drove, a young man walked, and a moment later the girls saw the white golf ball strike him on the head. He fell as if shot, dropping out of sight behind the long, grassy hill that formed a hazard on the links.

CHAPTER IX

ONWARD

"OH—oh, Rose!" gasped Hazel. "You—you've done it!"

"What has she done—killed him?" gasped Alice.

"Don't say such silly things!" chided Sylvia. "Come on and see!"

She darted forward, the short, golfing skirt she wore being no hindrance to her speed, but quick as Sylvia was, Rose was off ahead of her. She had cast her driver aside, and her face was now rather pale. The caddies followed, giving voice to various expressions.

Rose was first to reach the bunker. She found a very much dazed youth sitting up, holding a cap in one hand, while with the other he was rubbing his head.

"Oh! are you—hurt?" Rose gasped, kneeling down beside him.

"Just a little—little knock," he answered, cheerfully—as cheerfully as possible under the circumstances. "Who—who did it? Oh, it was a golf ball. I see," and he looked at the checkered sphere of white gutta percha that lay in the sand on the far side of the bunker.

"I did it," confessed Rose. "I called 'fore!' but I didn't see you until after I drove off. My friends called to me, but too late. I hope you're not badly hurt?"

"Hardly at all. My cap is quite thick. But it serves me right, anyhow. I ought not to have crossed the course. Now you girls are even with me," and he started to rise.

"Even with you?" repeated Sylvia, as she held out a brown and muscular hand to help him to his feet, for he seemed dizzy and weak.

"Yes. I'm the chap whose paddle broke in the canoe the time it ran into one that one of you girls was in. You've paid your score!" and he smiled, grimly.

"Oh! As if——" began Rose, now blushing to match her name.

"Of course I was only joking," he said, quickly. "Thank you," he went on to Sylvia. "It did knock me out a bit. I thought it was a lightning stroke, though I hadn't seen any clouds before I crossed the links."

"Oh, are you sure you're all right?" asked Rose, anxiously, while the circle of caddies stood in an outer ring, grinning sympathetically.

"Oh, yes, as right as ever," he said, saying nothing about the ache of his head. "Serves me right for crossing where I'd no business to. I'll go back, and you can go on with your game."

"Are you sure you're all right?" insisted Sylvia.

She recognised the youth now as one of the party that owned the big canoe.

"Positive," he answered, with a cheerfulness he did not altogether feel. "Allow me to restore your golf ball," he went on, picking up the one Rose had driven. "It doesn't seem to be harmed any," he went on, whimsically. "I think you ought to be allowed to take that shot over again. The ball was travelling pretty well when I interfered with it, and I'm sure you would get a better lay than this," and he indicated the sand.

"Yes, drive over again," suggested Alice.

The young fellow bowed pleasantly, winked at the caddies and walked back in the direction whence he had come when his course was so suddenly interrupted.

"No more crossing of golf courses for me!" he said, emphatically.

The girls insisted on Rose taking her drive again, and she went far beyond the bunker. Then the others, in turn, drove off from the tee, and the game was on.

Never was golf played under more ideal conditions. True, the girls had played on better and larger links, but this was a new locality for them, and every now and then they would pause to gaze off at the distant mountains, to look down at the little blue lakes or take deep breaths of the balsam-laden air.

"Oh, it's too nice, almost, to play golf," sighed

Sylvia. "I want to be in the woods—just in the woods."

"You'll be in the ditch in a minute, if you don't watch where you're driving," declared Alice. "Come on, play the game."

The girls were evenly matched, and even the caddies became interested in the impromptu contest.

"Say!" declared one youngster, "they are the real article all right. They sure can swing the clubs!"

It was his best and most sincere compliment, and Rose, whose second long, lifting drive had called it forth, smiled in a gratified way. She preferred a tribute such as that to one more or less half-hearted from some older and more sophisticated admirer.

Sylvia and Rose won by a small margin, much to their delight, especially Rose's, for she was an enthusiast, though the other girls were good players, too.

"Well, now for some tea, and then we'll freshen up for the dance to-night," suggested Hazel, as she removed her yellow chamois gloves. "I feel just like a dance!" and she curved and pivoted over the grass.

"We certainly are having a fine time here," declared Sylvia, "but we must not forget our plan to go on to Saranac. I know Roy will be anxious to see us, now that he knows we are coming. And I do so want to see him, and know that he is getting better."

"We all do, my dear," said Alice.

"There was no word to-day; was there?" asked Rose.

"No, I told the folks at home to relay the messages here every second day, as we could not tell just where we would be. But what do you girls say now to starting on through the Chain to-morrow, or next day?"

"Whatever you say," said Hazel. "They told me at the hotel there was good fishing around here, in some of the Fulton Chain lakes, and I'm anxious to try."

"Let's go fishing before we start on our trip!" proposed Rose, and Sylvia assented.

The next day they engaged boats and guides—two boats for four of them, and began to try their luck.

The girls at once won the admiration of the fishermen, for neither Sylvia, Rose, Hazel nor Alice was afraid to bait her own hook, and they could remove the fish once they had landed them.

"Oh, what luck!" cried Rose, as she hooked a large lake trout. She played her catch well, and brought him exhausted to the side of the guide-boat, to the envy of her companions.

But Sylvia was not far behind, with a good-sized bass. The season had opened only a few days before, so that the fish had not been thinned out.

Alice and Hazel had fair luck also.

"Well, those girls certainly can do anything!" declared one of the members of the porch rocking-

chair brigade as the four came back with strings of fish. "I wonder their folks allow them to rough it in this fashion."

"Why, they are with that delightful Southern lady," said a companion. "She is chaperoning them."

"Humph! I don't call it much chaperoning when she sits on a porch all day reading, and lets the girls go off with the fishermen."

"The fishermen around here are the finest men you could meet," was the quick answer. "I and several of my friends have been out with them. They are real gentlemen!"

"Humph!" sniffed the other. "They don't look it!"

There was a last dance at the hotel, a dance that brought forth many expressions of regret from the young men who had enjoyed the company of the Nowadays Girls.

"Will you stop here on your way back?" had been an oft-repeated question.

"Perhaps," Sylvia said, with a smile.

Once more they were going onward. They engaged guide-boats and guides and started up the Fulton Chain for Raquette Lake, where they intended to spend some time.

"And there we'll get a motor boat," said Sylvia, "and do a bit of exploring."

"That will be jolly!" cried Rose.

With their luggage, they took their places in the

guide-boats, and the start was made. It is twelve miles from Old Forge to the head of Fourth Lake of the Fulton Chain, where the first carry must be made. They had made an early start, and intended to have lunch in the open at the beginning of the carry, which they reached in due course.

“All out!” cried Sylvia, as the boats grounded on the shore. “All out, and get ready for lunch!”

CHAPTER X

A NIGHT OUT

THREE men had been engaged to take the party of girls and Mrs. Brownley through the Fulton Chain of lakes. As has been said, the journey may be made in a day, enabling one, with proper equipment and by using due speed, to reach Raquette Lake in time for a late dinner. This had been the plan of Sylvia and her friends.

They had planned to stop for lunch *en route* and, accordingly, had brought with them materials for a satisfying meal. One of the three men was a camp cook, and to him was entrusted the work of getting the meal ready. The other two men were guides or boatmen in whose craft the trip had thus far been made.

"Now if you'll get lunch ready we'll be ready for it as soon as we hear you call," Sylvia said to the chef.

"Are you going away, miss?" he asked, pausing in the work of taking from the boat various cunningly stowed-away packages.

"Just for a stroll in the woods," she told him.

"Well, don't go too far," he advised her. "If you don't know the trails you might get confused,

and have trouble findin' your way back. And if you expect to get to Raquette Lake to-night we can't lose much time."

"Oh, we'll not go far," Rose said.

"No, indeed!" chimed in Hazel, as she gave a surreptitious glance into a mirror hidden in the flap of her handbag, and gave her nose an equally secret "dab," though why she should, up in that wilderness, she herself could not have said.

"Too hungry to go far," added Alice.

"Why, can one become lost in these woods?" asked Aunt Theodora.

"Yes, indeed, lady!" exclaimed one of the boatmen. "I knowed a man who started to walk from one tree to another while he was waitin' for his coffee to boil, but when he got back the coffee pot had melted!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed the chaperon, with a lifting of her aristocratic eyebrows. "Did the fire become too hot?"

"Well, not exactly, lady, but you see the man got lost, and was gone so long that the coffee boiled away and the bottom of the pot melted. I'm only tellin' you that, so you won't go too far."

"There's no danger," Sylvia said, with a laugh. "We'll keep on the trail. And I think we'll have tea, instead of coffee," she added to the chef, for a tea outfit had been brought along, and one of the men was lighting the alcohol stove which was not only to boil water for the beverage, but also to warm

some of the numerous viands. Solid alcohol was used as fuel.

Indeed the Nowadays Girls had gone carefully into this matter of sojourning in the Adirondacks, and while they expected to spend most of the time at well-known hotels or in camp resorts, they were also provided for some life in the open, either in tent or cabin, and they had purchased the very latest in outfits.

"No smoky wood fires for us, except when we've had our meals and want to sit around it and be romantic," Sylvia had said, and the others had agreed with her. Consequently they had a small camping outfit with them that for compactness and convenience would be difficult to surpass.

So while the girls and Mrs. Brownley started off to admire the beauty of the woods and the end of Fourth Lake nestling amid the trees, the cook got ready the meal. He was an expert in his line, and after he had set the kettle over the flame of the nickled alcohol stove he found a good place to set the table on the ground, spreading the cloth over a layer of flat balsam branches which gave forth a most appetising odour.

The boatmen prepared to set off with the craft on the one-mile carry to Sixth Lake, the fifth, as I have explained, being omitted from the water route in covering the chain, since it was so winding that nearly twice the distance would have had to be covered if they kept to the boats.

There was not a little luggage to be transported, in addition to the boats, and the men would be kept busy. The heavier baggage had been sent on ahead to the town of Raquette Lake, located on the lower end of that body of water, just beyond the point where Brown's Tract Inlet joins it.

"Oh, did you ever see a more perfect place?" demanded Alice, as she came to a pause in the woods, and gazed about her.

"It's just grand," agreed Rose. "It makes one just glad to be alive; doesn't it, Baby?" she demanded of her diminutive chum, who was thoughtfully gazing off into the depths of the forest.

"What is it? Oh, yes, of course!" was the rather hasty answer.

"She hasn't heard a word we've said!" laughed Alice. "Never mind, Baby. We all know what *you* are thinking of, at any rate," and playfully she ruffled the hair of the smaller girl.

"Oh, don't!" was the protest.

"What matter? No one to see you here, Baby, except the boatmen, and they don't count."

"Oh, but we must always look our best, even before servants, my dears," remonstrated Mrs. Brownley, gently. That was one rule she insisted on. *Négligée* had in this lady one of its most deadly enemies.

"Oh, well, of course, I didn't mean just that," apologised Alice.

They strolled on through the dense woods that

came to the very edge of the trail. Now and then the silence was broken by the crashing down of some old tree, or the fall of a dead branch. Again, birds would give voice to their chirping notes, and the flutter of their wings would be heard. Occasionally, from some lonely and unseen pond, would come the call of the loon, that strange and often solitary bird whose cry has such a weird sound, especially if heard at the dead of night. Again would come the distant voices of boatmen, or of camping parties, *en route* even as our friends were.

"And to think," said Sylvia, softly, "that up there," and she pointed to the north, "Roy is in these same woods. I wonder what he is doing?"

"Getting well and strong, I hope," said Mrs. Brownley, cheerfully.

"I hope so, too," murmured Rose.

They returned to the place where they had left their boats to find a simple but perfectly-prepared meal awaiting them. Spread out on the snowy cloth, set off wonderfully well by the border of underlying layer of green balsam boughs, were the viands they had brought. The kettle sang cheerfully on the alcohol stove and there was an omelet, so light that it seemed a breath would flatten it out like a griddle-cake.

"Just in time, ladies," the chef remarked. "The omelet is all ready to serve."

Such appetites as the girls brought to the feast!

"There won't be much left to take over the carry,"

observed Sylvia. "Pass the olives, Rose dear. That is, if Alice has left any."

"Left any! What do you mean?"

"Oh, we all know your fondness."

"There's an unopened bottle," remarked Hazel. "I had some extra ones put in."

"Bless you, my dear!" murmured Alice. "They are so tasty, especially in the woods."

The luncheon went on amid merry quip and laughter. When it was over the men had their meal, and one of them offered to walk on ahead with the girls and Mrs. Brownley, and show them the trail to Sixth Lake. It was quite plain, through the woods, for it was much-travelled, but the guide was not going to risk his reputation by having any of his party stray off into the forest, and have it be said of him that he did not look well after his patrons.

The chef and the other guide remained behind to bring on the luncheon articles. The boats and baggage, having been safely transported, awaited the arrival of the girls at Sixth Lake.

"About what time do you think we shall get to Raquette Lake?" asked Sylvia of the man in her boat, when they were once more under way.

"We ought to be there about seven o'clock, miss. That is, if nothing happens," and he gave a hasty glance at the sky.

"If nothing happens! What do you mean?" demanded Mrs. Brownley.

"Well, it's nothing to be alarmed about, but I

think we're going to have a thunderstorm," he remarked. "That might delay us, for sometimes it rains so hard that it's hard to see where you're rowing, and we may have to stop on shore until it's over."

"Are there any places to stop?" asked Sylvia, determined to make provision for the worst, if necessary.

"Oh, yes, there are open camps, and some closed ones where we could put up if we couldn't reach Raquette Lake. But we'll try to get you there. Pull hard, boys," he called to his companion and the chef, who was also taking his "spell" at the oars of the light guide-boats.

But it was evident to the girls themselves that they were not going to escape the storm. To the low and deep rumblings in the west, there succeeded louder-voiced mutterings of some unseen god of the weather. The black clouds were slashed open now and then by vivid streaks of lightning, rose-tinted and pink, and again of a flashing electric blue-green in colour.

"We're going to get it!" murmured one of the men.

The girls looked anxiously toward the shores of Seventh Lake, on which they then were. The water was about a mile in width here, and they were in the middle.

"We'd better put in!" called the leading boatman to the others. "I thought we could make Henderson's, but we can't! Lively now!"

It became darker and darker. The thunder was coming more and more frequently, and the darkness that had suddenly fallen over the brightness of the day was relieved at intervals by the hissing lightning.

"Here it comes!" cried one of the guides.

An instant later the lake seemed to boil with the violence of the rainfall. The girls and Mrs. Brownley, having been warned in time, had put on mackintoshes, but the men scorned anything like that, and did not stop to don any extra garments.

They pulled desperately for the shore, and reached it in the midst of a driving downpour.

"Over this way," directed the leading guide, as the boats grated on the shore. "There's a shack around here somewhere."

He led the way, and a little later they all stood under a rude shelter that was sufficiently water-tight to keep off most of the rain. The things in the boats had been covered with pieces of canvas.

"Oh!" screamed Rose as a particularly vivid flash and a crash of thunder came almost together. "That struck near here!"

"I guess it did, miss," was the cool answer of the guide called Jimmie.

"Did it hit a house?" asked Alice.

"No, some tree I reckon," said the guide who had been addressed as Jake. "Lots of times trees get struck up here. We don't mind it much."

"Shall we be able to go on?" asked Mrs. Brownley, anxiously.

"Well, if this rain lets up we can, easy, or we could manage to keep goin' in the boats, anyhow, if you didn't mind it," Jake answered.

"I think it will be better to wait," suggested Sylvia. "I don't like being on the lake in an open boat during a storm."

"Nor I," added Hazel.

"But it doesn't seem as though it would ever stop," broke in Alice, dubiously. "It's raining harder than ever."

"What shall we do if we can't go on?" Rose wanted to know.

"Well, we'll have to stay here—camp out or do something," Sylvia said. "You spoke of a camp, or something, near here?" she went on questioningly to Jimmie.

"Yes, miss. There's a good cabin not far from here. It's hired out to parties, and it's well furnished. If that isn't in use you can stay there if you don't want to go on."

"But what about places to sleep, and things to eat?" asked Mrs. Brownley.

"That's all provided, lady. There's grub—that is, food—at the cabin, and plenty of beds, such as they are. Not feathers, of course, but——"

"Oh, we don't in the least mind roughing it," put in Sylvia. "In fact, I think it would be rather jolly than otherwise."

"So do I!" exclaimed Alice. And as Hazel also joined in, there was nothing for Rose to do but

agree. And so, as the rain showed no signs of slackening, it was decided to spend the night out in the little cabin, to which the guides offered to lead the party. And a little later they set off through the woods in the downpour.

CHAPTER XI

TROUBLE

"WHY, this isn't half bad!"

"No, indeed! I think it's real cosy!"

"And what a lovely open fireplace!"

"A fire wouldn't be at all out of the way now. I'm thoroughly drenched, girls!"

Our four friends thus expressed themselves in turn as they stood in the little log cabin to which the guides had conducted them through the storm. They could hear the rain beating down on the slab roof, hear it pattering on the leaves of the trees that surrounded the place, and they listened to the sigh of the wind as it lashed itself to fury in a semblance of a hurricane.

"It's better than I expected, my dears," said Mrs. Brownley, after a quick survey of the small bedrooms opening from the main apartment.

"Then we'll stay here to-night," decided Sylvia. "That is, if we may?" she added to the guides.

"Oh, yes," said Jimmie, quickly. "You see, we have charge of this place—me and my partner. We let it out when any one wants it, and it's lucky it didn't happen to be engaged just now. You can stay here and welcome."

"We'll pay the usual price, of course," said Sylvia, quickly, "and be glad of the opportunity. You spoke of something to eat?" she went on.

"Yes, I guess it's pretty well stocked with canned stuff. We might catch a few fish, even if it does rain. We can bring up your things from the boats, and the bunks are made up fresh."

"That's a comfort," sighed the chaperon. "We'll stay here, girls. And be glad of the opportunity. It will be an experience."

"But won't they worry at the Antlers?" asked Rose, referring to the hotel where they had engaged rooms for their stay at Raquette Lake. "They expect us, and know we are coming up the lake. If we don't arrive——"

"I guess I can manage to telephone 'em by night-fall," put in one of the guides. "I'll tell 'em you are storm-bound."

"Then it will be all right," Rose remarked, with a sigh of relief. She really could not bear to think of going on the lake in the storm.

"I'll make a fire on the hearth," the chef said, and while he busied himself at that the other two guides set off to bring up the baggage from the boats. Mrs. Brownley and the girls proceeded to make themselves comfortable, and to wait for the blaze to dry some of their damp garments and their shoes.

Tramping along the wet and soggy trail, burdened with the baggage from the boats, the guides

came back to the cabin. But it was a more cheerful place than when they had left it, for now a fire was merrily crackling on the hearth, and the faces of the girls and that of Mrs. Brownley had lost much of the worried, nervous look. They were quite content to spend the forthcoming night where they were.

A hasty search through the cabin had revealed a sufficient quantity of food, together with what was left from luncheon, to make an evening meal and breakfast. Then, too, the discovery that the place contained several "cute" little bunks, with inviting sheets and plenty of coverings, added to the feeling of comfort.

The guides had announced that there was another shanty nearby where they were in the habit of sleeping when stopping in the woods overnight with a party that occupied the main cabin. They would use the annex on this occasion.

And so, with supplies from their baggage to draw on, and with the prospect of a meal whenever they wanted it, our friends resigned themselves to the situation. And it was not such an unpleasant situation, after all. In fact it was really cosy to listen to the crackle of the fire on the hearth, and contrast it with the patter of the rain outside.

Clearly it would have been out of the question to have gone on in the storm in open boats. This they all decided when one of the guides went out to find the nearest telephone to communicate with the Ant-

lers. He managed to discover one after an hour or two.

By this time an early supper had been served, and the girls and Aunt Theodora prepared to spend the evening as best they could in the cabin, for it was out of the question to do anything else than sit around and talk.

They found some old magazines, but the lights were none of the best for reading, so they gave that up, and sat in front of the blaze, seeing pictures in the flames, and telling fortunes.

The guides had retired to their own cabin, not far away, and from it, now and then, could be heard guffaws of laughter which served to relieve the quietness of the woods, that was broken, otherwise, by only the patter of the rain.

It was close to midnight when the girls went to their beds, for they did not feel sleepy, and preferred sitting up to tossing restlessly on the narrow bunks. They occupied three rooms, Rose and Sylvia being in one, Hazel and Alice in another and Mrs. Brownley in the third, all opening from the main apartment, or living room, of the cabin.

Just who first heard the call and the following rap on the door is uncertain. They all seemed to awaken at the same time, and Sylvia demanded:

"What is it? Who's there?"

"What's the matter?" asked Rose, nervously.

"Some one outside knocking and calling," said Sylvia. "Listen, Rose!"

There came a pounding on the door, and a voice called:

“Open and let us in. We’re in trouble!”

“Trouble?” voiced Sylvia, half frightened.

“Yes, we’ve lost our way. There are ladies here!”

“Oh, do let us in!” besought a tearful voice that was unmistakably feminine.

“What—what shall we do?” faltered Rose.

“Wait a minute!” came in the calm tones of Mrs. Brownley.

CHAPTER XII

THE MOTOR BOAT

THE chaperon, who had hastily donned a dressing-gown and warm slippers, made her way to the locked and barred door.

"What is it?" she turned to ask Sylvia, who, too, had arisen, and hastily garbed herself in whatever was nearest to hand.

"Some one knocked, and——"

She was interrupted by the very thing she was explaining—a rap on the stout slab door.

"Is any one here?" a voice demanded. "We see a light, and there is a lady here—two ladies and——"

"Oh, please let me in!" begged a half-sobbing voice. "I am wet through, we are lost and—and——"

"One moment," Aunt Theodora said, firmly. "Let the ladies advance, and the gentlemen retreat."

It was as though she had said: "Advance, friend, and give the countersign!"

"Henry, you go away," said a voice on the other side of the door. "Suzanne and I will go in."

"But what is to become of me?" was the answer. "What will Ritz and I do in this wilderness?"

"We shall settle that later," went on the woman's voice. "Go away. I understand why they do not

want you to be in sight when they open the door. There are ladies in there!"

"Oh!" There was a world of comprehension in his exclamation.

"I'm going to open the door," said Mrs. Brownley. "You ladies are welcome to such shelter as we have. How many of you are there?"

"Two women and two men," a feminine voice answered.

"The two men will have to go elsewhere. We have only ladies in here," said the chaperon, as she fumbled with the fastenings of the door. Under the watching eyes of her own four young ladies, she swung back the door. A gust of rainy wind entered, blowing ashes from the half-dying fire all about. From the darkness, into the mellow glow of the hearth-blaze and the gleam from the night-light, stepped two women from whom dripped much water. One appeared to be the mistress, the other a maid, and the former, fairly staggering in, let fall a light valise while, throwing up her arms in a tragic gesture, she exclaimed:

"Oh, what a honeymoon!"

For a moment Mrs. Brownley, and the girls as well, had a wild suspicion that they had admitted a lunatic, for the woman's appearance was sufficiently wild. But a second glance served to show that the disorder of her hair and clothing was due to the storm, against which she had evidently been struggling for some time.

Her companion stepped farther into the light, and Mrs. Brownley quickly closed the door. The maid, for such she evidently was, had a larger valise. She gave a quick glance around, and a smile came to her face, dimpling her rosy cheeks and rippling through her snapping black eyes.

"Ah, madame! we are all right now!" she cried, gaily enough. "Suzanne will look after you, if these gracious ladies will tell us where to find a room. We are safe now, madame!"

Once more the other woman—no, hardly a woman, for she was but a girl in years and appearance—flung her arms wide with rather a stagy effect and again cried out:

"What a honeymoon!"

"Honeymoon!" echoed Mrs. Brownley. "Do you mean to say you——"

"Yes, we are on our honeymoon!" was the answer. "Oh, isn't it—isn't it just—romantic!" and instead of bursting into tears, which might reasonably have been expected, she gave forth a peal of laughter, showing two rows of perfect, white teeth that gleamed against the dark olive tint of her face, her cheeks showing dusky red under the influence of the heat, as she came in from the chilling rain.

"Did you ever spend the first night of your honeymoon tramping through the woods in the rain?" she asked, appealing not only to Mrs. Brownley, but also to the interested girls, now staring at the newcomers with various questions in their eyes.

"I never did," said the chaperon, with the accent on the personal pronoun, "and as for my friends——"

"They are not married—I understand. But, oh! You must think we are crazy to come in on you in the middle of the night. Let me explain."

But before she could do so there came another knock on the door, and a man's voice, an anxious man's voice, demanded:

"Are you all right, Natalie? Can you remain there for the night? Are you comfortable?"

"It's my husband!" she spoke the words with an embarrassed little laugh. "He—he——"

"He can stay with the guides, over in the other cabin," said Mrs. Brownley. "We can put you and——er——"

She hesitated.

"Suzanne is my maid," filled in the bride, Natalie.

"We can give you a room, you and your maid," went on the chaperon. "And if you are hungry——"

"I am—famished. We've been lost in the woods—oh, ever so long! Bob doesn't know a thing about the woods, nor do I, though he thinks he does because he went camping once," and she laughed merrily, as though it were a great joke—all of it, rain included. "So we got lost when he insisted on making the trip up the lakes without a guide," she went on. "He has his man with him—the man and Suzanne are engaged," she added, "so you see we are quite a

wedding party. But, oh, what a way to spend a honeymoon!" and again she laughed.

"Isn't she sweet?" whispered Rose to Sylvia.

"She's a bit hysterical, I think."

"Oh, Sylvia, how can you?"

"I mean she's a bunch of nerves, and no wonder, after what she has had to go through," Sylvia retorted. "Poor thing, we must get her warm and dry, and make her some tea. I'll get on some real clothes."

"So will I."

Again came the summons at the portal.

"Are you quite all right, Natalie?"

"Yes, Bob, dear!" She whispered the last against the wood of the unsympathetic door, and turned a blushing face to those in the cabin. "I am perfectly all right. It is a charming place. I hope you find as good. You couldn't possibly come in here. It is entirely—out—of—the question!" and she laughed merrily.

"I don't mind, sweetheart, as long as you are all right, and have Suzanne with you. I can sleep in the woods."

"Oh, Bob!"

"He won't have to!" said Mrs. Brownley, practically. "The guides will look after him and his man. Now then, Miss——"

"Mrs. Parson," was the correction. "Since this morning—or was it yesterday—I've lost track of the time."

"It's morning now," Alice said, with a glance at her watch.

"Then it is since yesterday. Oh, but it is so sweet of you to take us in this way! Bob, you're to go to the guides' tent, or cabin or whatever it is," she called through the door.

"All right, they're here now, at least some men are calling to me to come to them," Bob said. "I dare say I shall be all right. Good night, dear!" The last was whispered.

"Good night," she blew a kiss from the tips of her dainty fingers. "He *is* such a dear boy!" she added, but it was not said in the least gushingly.

"Well, better get on some dry clothes, if you have them," said the chaperon, as outside the cabin could be heard the tramp of feet and the voices of the guides as they took charge of the other wayfarers. "If you haven't——"

"Oh, we have, thank you, plenty. Suzanne!"

Mrs. Parson seemed to be used to being waited on, and her maid took from the valise some dry garments, and retired with Natalie, as the girls liked to think of her, to the other bedroom. She presently came into the main apartment, clad in a gorgeous Japanese kimono, with heavy gold butterflies and cranes scattered profusely over it.

"I'll have tea in a minute," Sylvia said, lighting the little alcohol stove.

"I beg of you to let me do it," Suzanne said. "I am used to this."

"Yes, Suzanne will make it," said the bride. "Then I'll tell you all that happened. You must think we are a couple of loons to come to you in this way."

"Indeed we are refugees ourselves," said Sylvia. "We were caught in the storm on our way to Raquette Lake and had to come here."

"Oh, are you going to Raquette Lake? That's where we are going to stop—at the Antlers!"

"So are we!" chimed in Rose.

In a moment it was as though they all had known the bride for some time. She was a charming person, democratic, though refined, and she soon sketched for them as much of her history as was necessary to divulge under the circumstances.

She had been often to the Adirondacks before with her parents and, not wanting the usual honeymoon, had stipulated that after the ceremony she and her young husband should be allowed to slip away to the lake region, where she had spent so many happy years.

"And it would have been all right but for the rain, and if Bob had been content to take a guide. But he wouldn't," she said.

"Consequently, when the rain came and we went ashore with the canoe, we lost our bearings. I simply would not go back in the boats, and so we started out through the forest. We carried our luggage, with the help of Suzanne and Ritz, but at last we could go no farther. Then we saw your light and—

well, here we are!" she finished, with a pathetic little gesture of her hands.

"And very welcome," said Mrs. Brownley. "We can all go on together in the morning."

"Oh, that will be perfectly splendid. I just love company!"

"Even on a honeymoon?" asked Sylvia, with a sly smile.

"Even on a honeymoon. Bob does, too. He's *such* a dear boy—a regular *boy!*" and she laughed merrily. Somehow it was good to hear Natalie laugh.

"The tea is ready," Suzanne said. "Will you not all have some?" she asked, for deftly she had found cups and saucers, the condensed milk and sugar, and set them out.

"I'll not sleep a wink if I take tea now," Mrs. Brownley said. "There is some malted milk in my bag. I'll just make a hot cup of that and——"

"Permit me, madame!" interposed the maid. "I shall have the pleasure," and she began making the beverage for the chaperon.

There came another knock on the door, as the tea was being sipped, and a voice demanded:

"Are you sure you are all right, Natalie?"

"Quite, Bob! Go away now, that's a dear. Are you provided for?"

"Oh, yes, we have a bunk and the men are making coffee and frying bacon!"

"Ugh! Bacon at this hour of the morning!"

gasped the bride, with a shrug of her pretty shoulders. "There, Bob, run along," she advised.

Somehow the girls, their chaperon and the bride, with her maid, got back to their beds, but it is safe to assume that no one slept much more that night. In the morning the rain had ceased, and though the woods were very wet, there was a promise of their speedy drying, for the sun rose bright and warm.

"Oh, isn't it just glorious!" cried Natalie, as she stood in the doorway and waved her hand toward the guides' camp. "I wouldn't have missed this experience for anything. It is one honeymoon of a thousand!"

"I hope she doesn't intend to have that many," remarked Hazel, who was a bit peevish. She could not stand the loss of sleep. It made her cross, as it does some babies. But she was soon herself again.

Bob and his wife proved the most delightful of acquaintances. He was in fine spirits, even following the rather depressing experience of the night before, and after breakfast it was arranged that the two parties should go on to Raquette Lake together.

"I'm going to take no more chances of being lost in the woods," said the bridegroom.

"You learn your first lessons well," observed Mrs. Brownley.

"Oh, but I didn't in the least mind being lost!" laughed Natalie. "See what charming friends it brought us, Bob."

"Indeed I would do it over again if I had the

chance," he said, gallantly, bowing to the girls and Aunt Theodora.

"I like him!" whispered Rose to Sylvia.

"You mustn't!" was the caution.

"Not enough liking to work harm," was the laughing retort.

Once more they were on their way up Seventh Lake. The carry was successfully made, and then came the trip of a little over a mile on the final body of water in the Fulton Chain.

A land journey of a mile and a half brought our friends to Brown's Tract Inlet and in due time they were floating on the beautiful waters of Raquette Lake, over which they were rowed to the village itself, at the terminal of the Raquette Lake Railroad.

The Antlers, about a mile from the railroad station, was soon reached, and there our friends and the bridal party were made doubly welcome, for there had been not a little worriment on the part of some friends of the latter who expected them, but to whom no word could be sent.

"How long are you going to stay here, my dears?" asked Natalie, who was made almost one of the Nowadays Girls.

"It is uncertain," Sylvia said. "We are gradually making our way to Saranac, where my brother is ill."

"Oh, I am so sorry!"

"But he is doing as well as can be expected, so we are not hurrying."

"I see. You are getting in as many experiences as you can, for that quaint little club of yours. It is such a clever idea, my dears! Positively I intend to adopt something like it myself when I get back. I am so glad you are going to stay here. Do you golf?"

"They do everything. I've found out all about it!" interrupted Bob Parson. "They tennis, fish, motor——"

"Oh, do you motor?" interrupted Natalie. "I mean boat, of course, for the roads aren't anything to boast of up here. I do wish we could arrange for a motor-boat trip."

"I think we can," Sylvia said.

"How?" asked Alice. "First we've heard about that, *El Capitan!*" and she stiffly saluted, military fashion.

"I've just been talking it over with Aunt Theodora," Sylvia went on. "I saw a lovely motor boat out on the lake and inquired about it. Seems that it was engaged by a party and they had to give it up on account of a change of plan. So it's for hire and I've planned to engage it for a week at least, and two if we want it."

"Oh, you dear!" cried Rose. "To think of motoring for a week on this lovely lake!"

"When may we start?" Hazel wanted to know.

"As soon as we like. Aunt Theodora has practically agreed, if we can find a reliable man to take with us."

"At your service!" said Mr. Parson, with an exaggerated bow.

"Do you know anything about motor boats?" demanded Natalie, rather suspiciously for a "newly-wed." "The last time I was out with you——"

"*De mortuis nil nisi bonum!*" he said, softly.

"Oh!" gasped Rose, "did some one——"

"The *boat* died," he replied. "I ran it into a pier and it sank. But I do know something about motors."

"Oh, it isn't *that* so much," Sylvia put in; "I think Aunt Theodora wants a man along just for looks!"

"Once more, at your service," bowed Mr. Parson. Even Alice, who was, perhaps, hypercritical, admitted that he was good-looking.

"Then let's make up a motor-boating party," proposed Natalie. "My husband and I will be charmed to go with you girls. Can you run a boat? Of course you can," she answered her own question promptly.

"We have," said Hazel, modestly. Indeed all four were experienced in boats as well as in automobiles.

"Come down and see the *Clytie*," suggested Sylvia. "She's a beauty!"

CHAPTER XIII

BY THEMSELVES

THE motor boat was made fast to a small private dock which stretched out into Raquette Lake. Sitting in the craft, as the girls and their newly wed friends, the Parson bride and groom, approached, was a man of sour, not to say forbidding countenance. He was whittling a stick, snipping the curling pieces of wood off with a formidable-looking knife, and letting them fall into the placid waters of the lake, whence they were blown away by little puffs of wind.

"Who is he?" asked Rose of Sylvia in a whisper as they came to the edge of the dock and looked with longing eyes—all four of the Nowadays Girls—at the boat.

"He's the skipper, caretaker, pilot, captain, whatever is the proper title for a man in his capacity on a motor boat."

"He looks like Charon," murmured Alice.

"Hush! He'll hear you, and he's very sensitive," admonished Sylvia.

"Do you know him?" Hazel wanted to know.

"I've talked with him. Don't you dare call him Charon, Alice. He'll begin inquiring who Mr. Charon

was, and when we explain that he was the dog-faced ferryman of the underworld, why then he'll up and act mean. So don't make such allusions, if you are wise."

"Charon wasn't dog-faced," announced Hazel.

"Wasn't he? At any rate he wasn't a desirable acquaintance for a summer motor-boat cruise, so kindly cease to remember."

"In other words—forget it!" exclaimed Rose.

"What *are* you girls talking about?" demanded Natalie, with one of her merry laughs.

"Oh, just nonsense!" said Sylvia. "But how do you like the boat?"

"It's a beauty!" exclaimed Alice, with sparkling eyes.

"And so complete!" declared Hazel. "May we really charter her?"

"I think it can be arranged," Sylvia answered. "We'll go aboard."

Meanwhile the sour-faced man was stolidly whittling away on the piece of soft pine wood. He seemed to put a deal of vindictiveness into his cuts and slashes, as though he were taking revenge on some enemy.

"Good morning," called Mistress Sylvia, with a bright and cheerful smile, while her companions, including the bride and groom, formed a little group back of her. "A beautiful day, isn't it?"

"For them as likes this weather," was the growled response, and the man never looked up, but went on

whittling. Rose saw that he was cutting out a dagger—prophetic implement, perhaps.

“Oh, I think it’s perfectly delightful,” went on Sylvia.

“You do have such charming days up in the Adirondacks,” added Alice, determined to do what she could to help Sylvia chase away the gloom from the dour one’s countenance, for such, so Alice made a guess, was the intent of her chum.

“The sunshine is—er—so—er—sunshiny!” said Rose, a bit lamely.

“And the water is so wet!” finished Hazel, with a frank laugh.

The man looked up, for the first time, and grunted:

“Ugh!”

“How are you this morning, Mr. Wrack?” went on Sylvia.

“Oh, ’bout as well as I’ll ever be, I expect,” he said, dismally. “This bright sun hurts my eyes, and I’ll be havin’ hay-fever soon, I expect, which is one reason why I like rainy days best. The dust from the flowers don’t fly so then, and I don’t have to sneeze so often. But now, havin’ to stay here with this boat until the land knows when, I don’t know what will happen,” and once more he cut savagely at the bit of wood, making the shavings fly.

“That’s what we came to see you about,” said Sylvia, sweetly. “We are thinking of hiring it.”

“You be? Good!” The man seemed to undergo a Jekyll-Hyde transformation. His face lost the sour

look, and he straightened up, throwing the half-completed dagger overboard. "I hope you do," he went on. "Since the party that did engage her disappointed me I haven't known what to turn my hand to. Will you really take her?"

"If we can come to terms," said Sylvia. "Our chaperon says we may plan a motor-boat trip. I have told her of the *Clytie*, and now we have come to see about it."

"Oh, I'll treat you right, lady. I'll treat you right!" exclaimed Mr. Wrack. He seemed a different person.

It developed that he was not the owner of the craft, but had been engaged to pilot it about Raquette Lake for a party of summer visitors, who chartered the boat from the owner, who had engaged Mr. Wrack. But the plans of the party could not be carried out, for a reason that would not interest us, and there was the prospect of the boat's being idle all summer.

"And I'd have been idle too," Mr. Wrack said, "for it's gettin' late in the season to hire out a motor boat and pilot to any advantage. But if you'll take her and me it won't be so bad. I'll make the price right. Mr. Harrison, who owns the *Clytie*, left her to me after them other folks backed out."

Sylvia and her girl chums were very practical if they were girls with the latest ideas in regard to fashion, dances and other amusements. They had liberal allowances, and they knew how to make them

cover their needs. So it was not long before they had struck a bargain with Mr. Wrack. Aunt Theodora was again consulted and gave her consent, and it was arranged that they were to have the entire use of the boat for two weeks at least, and longer if they desired.

The Parsons were included in this bargain, and as they were to remain at Raquette Lake until late fall they had an option on the craft after our friends should have finished with her.

"And you go with the boat," said Sylvia to the sour-faced man, sour no longer now that he realised he would have employment. He did not even mention hay-fever, and he looked at the sun occasionally. "What I mean," went on Sylvia, "is that you'll run the boat for us when we want you to, and when we don't, we'll run it ourselves."

"Can you?" asked the pilot, doubtingly.

"Try us and see!" exclaimed Alice.

"Let's go for a run in her," suggested Hazel.

And so they started off. The girls' admiration for the *Clytie* increased as they made a closer inspection.

"She certainly is a beauty!" declared Rose.

"Indeed, yes!" agreed Sylvia. "Self-starter, reverse gear, double ignition system, weedless propeller, electric lights and lots of room."

"Why, we could sleep here and cook here," added Alice.

There was a half-cabin, with bunks that made

seats during the day. There was also a little alcohol stove and a tiny galley fitted with a small collection of cooking utensils.

"She was built to allow folks to spend a night or two out in her," said Mr. Wrack, as he sat at the wheel.

"Let me steer," begged Sylvia, and, having explained some of the peculiarities of the lake, and what danger-spots to avoid, the pilot did so. The *Clytie* was of very light draught, to enable her to go in shallow water.

By turns the four girls operated the boat around the sunny waters of the lake, running over to Big Island and back again. Mr. Parson also showed that he knew how to handle the craft, but Natalie showed no desire to do so.

"I'd be sure to turn the wheel the wrong way, and send you all to the bottom," she declared.

"The bottom isn't far off right here," observed Mr. Wrack. "It's mighty shallow hereabouts."

The Nowadays Girls proved that they could manage a boat, to the not unexact requirements of the pilot, after which he "took it easy" and let them do as they liked. They soon mastered the mechanical details.

A day or so after having chartered the *Clytie*, during which time Mrs. Brownley had made several trips about the lake, Sylvia proposed that she and her chums, with the Parsons, go for a trip by themselves—that is, without Mr. Wrack.

He was satisfied to allow this, as he realised that the girls were expert enough to look after themselves. So the trip—an all-day one, lunch to be taken on Osprey Island—was planned.

But at the last minute Aunt Theodora developed a headache, which, she well knew, would not be benefited by going out on the water in the sun.

"Oh, isn't it too bad!" exclaimed Sylvia. "Then——"

"Yes, you may go, my dears," said their kindly chaperon. "I know you can look after yourselves, and it's broad daylight. There are many craft on the lake, too. Just run along and have a good time. I'll be all right. I'll just lie down and rest."

And when Sylvia went to call for the Parsons, Natalie had most unaccountably forgotten the engagement, and she and her husband had gone off together in a canoe.

"Well, did you ever!" exclaimed Rose.

"Let's go by ourselves," suggested Hazel.

"We could get Mr. Wrack," said Alice, hesitatingly.

"No, I told him we wouldn't need him, and he went over to Forked Lake to see some friends. So if we go, we'll have to go by ourselves."

"Then let's go that way—just ourselves!" proposed Alice. "We have the boat, the lunch and everything. Let's go, and perhaps we may have an adventure!"

CHAPTER XIV

A DISMAL PROSPECT

CHEERFULLY chugging along was the *Clytie*. I say cheerfully, for the rhythmical sounds of the exhaust, gentle enough in themselves thanks to a good muffler, were accompanied by snatches of song from one or another of the four girls who variously placed themselves about the craft. Sylvia was at the wheel. Rose lolled on a locker near her, regardless of the sun that was adding a tint of brown to the red in her cheeks. Alice had sought the seclusion of the cabin for a time, to readjust her wind-blown hair, and Hazel was boldly perched well up in the bow, sitting tailor-fashion, like some modern figurehead. She laughed gleefully when spray splashed up from the waves into her face.

"Oh, it is glorious! glorious!" she chanted in time to the throb of the motor.

"Watch-girl, what of the outlook?" called Alice from the cabin. "Dost see anything of that adventure yet?"

"No," answered Hazel. "I see a canoe with two young men in it approaching, but they don't look at all romantic."

"Sheer off! Sheer off, Sylvia!" ordered Rose.

"We are dedicated to romance with a big R to-day. Nothing else will tempt us."

"I'd rather have a sandwich with a big S," said the steers-girl—or let us be real feminists and say steersman.

"You did put the lunch aboard; didn't you?" asked Rose, a "horrible suspicion gnawing at her vitals," as she confessed afterward.

"It is in the starboard locker," affirmed Sylvia.

"Right O, my hearty!" sung out Hazel. "I saw you put it there!"

And so they chugged on, now and then saluting some other craft, canoe or guide-boat, and an occasional motor boat, but the latter were rather few. Steamers plied the waters of Raquette Lake, and they answered the three tooting whistles of our girls in friendly salute.

"Alice, just look and see if the oil cups are full," begged Sylvia, as they worked successfully through a little swell and wash raised by a passing steamer. "I think the engine is getting too much, judging by the odour of the exhaust. If they're more than half empty screw down the feed a bit."

"Aye, aye, captain!" came the nautical return, and presently Alice, who had inspected the engine, carried in a forward compartment, reported that she had refilled the cups, and adjusted them so they would not feed too much lubricant to the cylinders.

Then she filled a tiny wash basin in the cabin, and washed her hands with violet-scented soap.

"I can't bear the smell of oil when I'm going to eat," she said, in explanation.

"But you're not going to eat right away, my dear," said Sylvia. "We aren't going to have lunch until we get to Osprey Island, and that won't be until noon." For they had gone in rather a round-about way, passing on the far side of Big Island to make the trip seem more worth while.

"Oh, well, I'm ready for lunch whenever it's ready for me," Alice said, as she pushed back the skin from the half-moons on her shapely fingers, thus manicuring them, though they seldom needed it.

The girls took turns at the wheel, for each one was experienced in this. The *Clytie* was a perfect boat, and answered her helm well.

"It would have been nice if Natalie and her husband had come along," said Rose. "I do enjoy her so much."

"He's nice, too," added Alice.

"Of course."

"But it's nice to be by ourselves, once in a while," suggested Sylvia. "I wonder how we are living up to our canons, girls?" she asked.

"You mean—up-to-dateness?" questioned Hazel.

"Exactly."

"Well, I think we can't be found fault with," was the opinion of Hazel. "There is certainly nothing slow about this!"

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way," said Sylvia, hastily. "Speed isn't everything."

"It is when one is motoring or boating," declared Hazel.

"A pity we couldn't run our cars up here," put in Alice, for there were automobiles in the family of each of our friends—more than one in some cases—and the girls were expert drivers.

"This is no place for cars," affirmed Sylvia. "Perhaps on our outing next season we may go where we can use them."

"Or to some place where we can have a motor boat of our own," put in Alice. "Wouldn't that be just lovely? To have a craft of our own, and go on a long cruise!"

"It would," assented Rose. "But this is very nice, and remember that this is our first outing. Do you intend to do this every year, Sylvia?" she continued.

"If we can, yes. Of course we can't tell what new friends and associations we may meet with when we start in at the different colleges this fall, but I think we shall be able to keep to our original plan, and have a 'get-together' session every summer to talk over nowadays matters, and take our part in them."

"Bravo!" cried Hazel. "No new college friendship shall lure me away from this, my first love—or, rather, my three best loves," and she pointed her finger in turn at each of her chums.

"Is Saranac Lake like this?" asked Rose, and immediately she blushed.

"Oh, look at her!" cried Alice, tantalisingly. "She can't stop thinking of Roy even now."

"I don't want to," answered Rose, more coolly than one would think from the way she looked.

"Good!" Sylvia complimented her. "Dear Roy! I do hope he is making progress. I ought to get a letter or telegram to-day. I expect it when we get back."

"There are three Saranac Lakes," said Hazel, who had apparently been "reading-up" on the subject. "They are Upper, Middle and Lower. But none of them, at least to look at on the map, is as large as this one, though Upper Saranac has a very long shore line, because it is so cut up and twisted. There is about forty miles of shore line here at Raquette."

"This lake suits me," murmured Alice, in lazy comfort.

"Oh, but I'm sure we'll find Saranac lovely," Hazel went on. "It's about fifty miles from here, and they say there are more than sixty other lakes and ponds which can be reached by short canoe trips from Saranac, that is, the upper lake, which, of the three, is the one nearest us."

"It must be pretty wet there," ventured Sylvia.

"It is, more water than land. I wish we could take the *Clytie* up there, but I don't suppose we can. Roy would appreciate this."

"No, it's hardly feasible. We couldn't carry her over land," Sylvia said.

"Just where is Roy?" asked Hazel.

"At the Loneberg Camp, not far from Saranac Inn. Oh, I am so anxious to see him," his sister went on, "and yet I don't want to get there too soon, for if he is on the verge of recovery the doctor said it might give him a setback to have the sudden joyful surprise of seeing us girls."

"Yes, we're beautiful enough, collectively, if not individually, to make a well youth faint, to say nothing of an invalid," declared Alice, with dry humour.

"Well, let's enjoy life while we may," suggested Sylvia. "Poor Roy!" and she sighed. "I hope he is having a good time."

But, had she only known it, Roy was having anything but a pleasant time just then. He was not at all himself.

Osprey Island was reached in due season, and finding a secluded spot, the girls moored their boat, went ashore and had lunch. Tea was made over the alcohol stove on board, and they sat about in the shadowy woods in delightful picnic fashion.

"Let's take a run over to Indian Point," suggested Hazel, when the lunch was over, and they were thinking of starting back toward the hotel.

"Shall we have time?" asked Sylvia, with a glance at the sun, which was already well down in the west.

"Oh, it's only about a mile from here," pleaded Hazel, pointing off to the west toward a body of land extending out into the lake, Indian Point being the name given it.

"Well, all right," assented Sylvia. "We can make a quick run back. Come on, let's start."

They went ashore at Indian Point, but they lingered longer than they thought, for the sun was in a glory of red, golden, purple and violet clouds when they went down to where they had left the boat.

"It will be quite dark when we get back," said Sylvia, "and we have to dress for dinner and the dance."

"And I'm not going to miss that dance for *anything!*" declared Alice. "That tall fellow has a new step in the fox trot that is simply delightful. Let's hurry."

But that was easier said than done, for when Sylvia stepped into the craft, and confidently shoved over the self-starter, there was only a groaning protest and the motor did not respond.

"Oh, I do hope we don't have to start by hand!" sighed Alice. "It is such a heavy engine."

"Well, it looks as though we should," said Sylvia, grimly, when, after several trials, the motor still refused to start. Clearly, or, rather, unclearly, something was wrong. It was not a very cheerful prospect. In fact it was most dismal, with night coming on, the girls some distance from their hotel, alone and with a "cranky," not to say unstartable, motor boat.

CHAPTER XV

A LONELY NIGHT

"CAN'T you make it work?" asked Hazel, when Sylvia had spent some time over the self-starter.

"I can't," was the answer, and Sylvia tried to keep from her voice any trace of anxiety or peevishness. But really she was tired and nervous.

"Let me try," suggested Alice, who was quite strong. "If I can't make the starter work I can turn the flywheel over by hand."

The self-starter operated on a storage battery, something like the mechanism of an automobile, but not as easily. But while the starter itself whirled around, the gears meshing in those of the flywheel with which it was connected by a jack shaft, there was no response in the motor itself.

"There doesn't seem to be a spark," said Sylvia, as she watched the effect of Alice's operations.

"Yes, there's a spark all right," declared Rose, who had her eyes on one of the patent spark plugs that had an upper chamber in which an auxiliary jump spark could be seen leaping from one platinum point to the other. "The spark is there, but it doesn't seem to fire the charge in the cylinder. Maybe there's no gasoline."

"Oh, yes, there is. I tested the tank only a few minutes ago," Sylvia said.

"Perhaps it's the carburetor," suggested Hazel, after a pause.

"Don't you dare say that!" cried Rose. "Once you start to change that adjustment it's all up with us. We'll be here for the night."

"Don't!" begged Baby, with an apprehensive glance at the now fast-darkening woods. They were on a lonely part of Indian Point.

"Oh, we'll get off somehow," Sylvia declared. "I wonder if there are any men about on whom we could call for help. I hate to think of trying to start the motor by hand."

"And that's what we'll have to do, soon," declared Alice. "The storage battery is almost run down."

This was only too true, since they had used much of the energy in trying to make the auxiliary motor of the self-starter do its work. And without the main motor running no more electricity would be available to recharge the storage cells.

"Well, here goes for a little gymnasium work," Alice said, rolling up her sleeves.

"I'll see if there's a man, or, perhaps, some campers about," volunteered Sylvia, "then I'll come back and take my share."

Again and again Alice, in the rather cramped quarters in which the motor was housed, tried to start it. But though she could disconnect the self-

starter gears, and turn over the flywheel, there was no answering explosion even then.

"It's the ignition," declared Sylvia, who came back in the gathering twilight to report that she could find no one to help in the comparatively short distance she went away from the others.

"Maybe it will start on the batteries," suggested Hazel.

"We've tried that," declared Alice.

"Well, try again," urged Sylvia. "We must do something. This is a terribly lonesome place, and I, for one, don't want to have to stay here all night!"

"I should say not, most decidedly!" exclaimed Hazel. "I—I'll *swim* back before I'll do that."

"Well, we certainly won't walk," said Rose, with determination. "We *could* manage to sleep aboard the *Clytie*!" she went on. "We could take a stone for an anchor, and shove the boat out in the lake, away from the shore."

"You seem to have it all thought out," commented Hazel. "Why away from the shore?"

"Then no—er—no snakes could crawl aboard!"

"Don't!" begged Alice, looking up with grimy face and hands from her labor over the motor. She wore gloves, but they did not much protect her, as they were splitting at the seams.

"Oh, we'll get off some time," Sylvia said. "Here, let me have a try, Alice."

She took her place at the wheel and worked hard and faithfully. But though the motor coughed,

sneezed and gave other evidences of senile decay, there was no healthy "wuff!" of a genuine explosion.

"There! That sounded like something!" cried Rose, suddenly, following a continued whirling about of the flywheel on the part of Sylvia.

"What sounded like something?" demanded Hazel.

"As if one of the cylinders had voted to go to work. Let me relieve you, Sylvia."

"No, if there's a hopeful sign, the best thing to do is to keep on before the cylinder gets cold."

Again she worked at the motor, and then, to the joy of the girls, it suddenly started off with a succession of heavy throbs as though it had intended to do so all the while, but had waited until sufficiently coaxed.

"There!" cried Sylvia, in relieved tones as she stretched out on a cushioned locker to ease the pain in her back. "Let her run now until she gets good and warm before throwing in the clutch."

"What was the matter?" asked Rose.

"Don't ask me, my dear. I think it was the timer, but I don't want to make any rash assertions for fear some other part of the mechanism will feel slighted and refuse to work until its claims have been recognised. So don't ask me."

"But it's working now!" Rose cried. "We'll get back in time for——"

"The dance!" finished Alice. "Shall I throw in the clutch now, Sylvia?"

"Yes, we'll take a chance."

There was a grinding, groaning and squealing sound as the clutch slipped into place. The water under the stern of the boat boiled and bubbled.

The *Clytie* started forward and then suddenly brought up with a jerk that jarred the girls.

"Oh!" screamed Hazel.

"What is it?" demanded Rose.

"It's just as well to loosen the mooring rope when you want to start," said Alice, dryly. "It's rather too much to ask a boat of this size to pull up a big tree by the roots," and she pointed to where the rope from the ring bolt of the forward deck was still tied to a tree on shore.

"I'll loosen it," offered Sylvia, and the motor was thrown out of gear to enable her to do this. Then, once more they started off, and steered the boat out around the head of Indian Point, for they had gone ashore on the side nearest to Sucker Brook Bay.

"I do hope it runs all right the rest of the way home," murmured Alice.

"Hush! Don't say a word! Knock wood!" Hazel advised her, in a mocking whisper.

It was now dark enough to call for the lighting of the lamps on the craft, and the signal ones, fore and aft, and the red and green ones on either side were set aglow.

"But we won't light the cabin ones yet," Sylvia decided.

"Why not?" demanded Alice. "I want to get

some of the grime off my hands. Otherwise I'll have to wear gloves at the dance, and I despise them on a warm night."

"We won't light the lights in the cabin until the storage battery has had a chance to pick up some current," Sylvia said. "You can just as well wash in the dark, and we may need current for the self-starter before we get home."

"I certainly hope not!" cried Hazel. "We've had trouble enough for one day. We won't get in until after dinner now, and those waiters are so fussy about serving anything after hours."

"Oh, well, we can tip them," said Sylvia. "I'm afraid we are going to be late, but we are running as fast as we dare in these waters. I don't know them at all."

They had reached a section of the lake around from Indian Point, and were heading down between the shore and Osprey Island when the motor suddenly ceased humming and throbbing.

"There!" cried Sylvia, tragically.

"Don't say I told you so," begged Alice.

"Head for shore, quick!" cried Rose to Hazel, who was steering.

"Why?" asked the latter.

"Because we don't want to drift all over the lake, and we have momentum enough to land now. Quick! Head for shore!"

Hazel did so, and the *Clytie* just managed to poke her nose gently against the bank in the fast-gathering

darkness. Alice and Sylvia were working frantically to start the motor again, but it would not respond.

"Well, what are we going to do?" asked Sylvia, when they had swung broadside to the bank. "It seems we can't get going again."

"Oh, must we stay here?" demanded Rose, with a glance at the dark and silent woods, while the lonely night settled down all about them.

CHAPTER XVI

THE LOON

"WE'LL stay here long enough to get the motor started again, and then we'll go on," declared Sylvia, with a confidence she did not altogether feel. In spite of her common sense and her "nowadaysness," she felt an almost overpowering sensation of fear. It was as if the darkness were pressing down on her like some black pall—a blanket, smothery and choking.

Yet it was but the ordinary darkness of the woods. But it was an intense blackness, relieved only by the stars, and only a few of them, for the night was somewhat cloudy.

Those of you who have never been in the woods after dark have no idea how black it can be at night.

In every city, and in most small towns and villages, there are some lights that burn all night. So that, even if you are not actually at the source of illumination, you can see a sort of diffused glow that, in a measure, cuts the blackness. But it is not so in the woods.

The very darkness of the tree trunks seems to add to the blackness of the night, as though they had absorbed what little light the sun might have left.

And if, perchance, you come upon a clump of white birches when travelling along a woodland path after night has fallen, they only seem to accentuate the darkness, standing out as they do like attenuated ghosts.

"Oh, I can't bear it!" went on Rose, with a little shiver. She cuddled close against Hazel. "I can't bear it!"

"Don't be silly," was the retort. "The dark can't hurt you."

"No, but to stay in—in those woods!" and Rose waved an unseen hand at the forest, to the very edge of which the *Clytie* had drifted with the last of her momentum after the stopping of the motor.

"We don't have to stay there, we can sleep on the boat and anchor it out in the lake," said Alice. "What are you doing, Sylvia?" she demanded.

"I'm going to try to start the motor," was the answer. "One of you girls get the boat hook and turn us around. I don't want to collide with the bank."

"No danger of that," declared Hazel. "She won't start, and if she does—wait, I'll throw out the clutch."

This she did, while Alice took the boat hook, and Sylvia proceeded to operate the self-starter again. The batteries had been recharged somewhat while the motor was going, operating the small dynamo, or magneto, and there was available an electric current for some little time.

Sylvia threw over the operating switch. There was a grinding of gears as the powerful little mechanism operated the propeller shaft, but the motor proper remained mute. Once again there seemed to be trouble with the ignition system, though the spark plugs showed, in the upper chamber where the auxiliary spark-gap was located, that there was current flowing somewhere.

"But it doesn't reach the ignition chamber and explode the gas," said Sylvia, in disappointed tones, as, again and again, she threw over the self-starter switch.

"Let it go," advised Hazel.

"What?" Sylvia cried.

"I say let it go. Don't try any more. It won't work. The engine needs overhauling, and there's no use wasting all the power in the storage battery. If we do we won't have any for lights, and we don't want to stay here in the dark."

"Mercy, no!" exclaimed Rose, shivering again.

"There are oil lamps," murmured Sylvia, as she looked at the self-starter again, as if she contemplated trying that once more.

"Oh, but they are so mussy," complained Alice. "Do leave some current in the battery for the incandescents. It will be something, anyhow, as long as we have to stay here."

"Oh, do we *really* have to stay here?" wailed Rose. "Can't we paddle home?"

"No oars," said Sylvia, briefly.

"And just where is home?" asked Alice. "Who knows?"

"Why—why—you can't see anything!" declared Hazel. "Look!"

"What's the use of looking if you can't see anything?" demanded Sylvia, just the least bit crossly. And no wonder, for she had laboured long over the motor, and fruitlessly.

"Oh, but we seem to be surrounded by darkness!" went on Hazel. "There isn't a patch of light anywhere but up above," and she motioned to one or two faintly-shining stars.

"We've drifted around some point of land, and we're in a little bay," was the opinion of Alice. "Two ends of land overlap. We can go out the way we came in, if we could only get the boat started."

"I don't like running in these unknown waters after dark," said Sylvia.

"But what are we to do, my dear?" asked Rose. "Can we stay here?"

"Can we stay anywhere else?" was the instant question. "We might as well make the best of it, I think, and get comfortable. We have something left to eat, we can make tea—or coffee if we brought any with us—and there is room to sleep, after a fashion."

"But not with the boat so near shore," insisted Rose, for the bow of the *Clytie* was scraping along the wooded bank in response to some slight current of air or water.

"No, we can anchor out a way," admitted Sylvia. "We'll have to go ashore, though, and get a stone for an anchor."

"Oh, what will Aunt Theodora think and say? What will the folks at the hotel think? They'll be worried to death, send out a search party for us, rouse the lake. It will be terrible!" cried Rose, in dismay.

"No more terrible for them than for us," retorted Sylvia. "This is none of our doing. We'd be only too glad to get back if we could. But we can't make the motor 'mote,' and it would be foolish and risky to get out in the middle of the lake, and be stalled there. We are much better off here."

"I suppose we could manage to call for help, or make our way to some camp or cottage," suggested Hazel.

"I'd rather not," Sylvia said, more calmly than she had yet spoken. "If we call for help, the chances are we wouldn't be heard. This seems to be a deserted part of Raquette Lake. Then, too, we'd only strain our voices, and get hysterically nervous if we didn't get an answer."

"What about shoving the boat along the shore, and close to it, with poles?" suggested Alice. "We could do that, and perhaps get to some camp that way."

"We might," assented Sylvia. "But do we want to reach the camp of some men or boys in the middle of the night, all tired out and dishevelled from our

efforts in poling the boat? I, for one, don't. I prefer to stay here, in our own boat, where we can lie down in some sort of comfort, at least. We can manage to get enough to eat with what we had left over from lunch. I vote we stay here!"

"But what will people say?" asked Hazel.

"What can they say? I guess it isn't the first time a motor-boat party has been stalled by a balky engine. People can't say anything."

"I shan't mind it if they do," declared Alice. "Nowadays girls are accorded many more privileges than in former years."

"Even to staying out all night without a chaperon?" demanded Rose.

"When it can't be helped—yes!" said Sylvia, half defiantly.

"Well, it certainly can't be helped, in this case," declared Alice.

"Poor Aunt Theodora!" murmured Hazel. "She will be distracted!"

"Nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Alice, in her most convincing tones. "She knows we can take care of ourselves."

"That's what I say," added Sylvia. "She knows we are in a good safe boat. Too safe!" she added, with a short laugh. "It won't even go, like the old lady's goat in the nursery rhyme. And we are all good swimmers. She may worry a bit at first, but she has had experience with too many schoolgirls' escapades to fret long."

"This isn't an *escapade*!" declared Rose.

"What is it, then?"

"It will be an *experience* before we have finished," said Hazel, with a short laugh.

Somehow the girls could laugh a little now. The feeling of gloom and terror was wearing off.

"Well, the first thing to do is to go ashore and find a stone for an anchor," said Sylvia, getting practical suddenly. Not that she had not been so before, but this was adapting practicality to new conditions. "We won't need a very heavy one, as there is little wind, and we won't drag much. We want to anchor only a very short way from the shore."

"What next?" asked Hazel.

"Next we'll find something to eat, and get comfortable for the night."

"I never could go to sleep," remonstrated Rose, with a premonitory glance over her shoulder at the blackness that seemed to grow more and more intense every moment.

"Well, if you sit up long enough you can go to sleep," suggested Sylvia. "Now I'll light a lantern, and we'll go ashore for the stone."

The boat was pushed around with the pole to enable a safe landing to be made. The rope was carried ashore and made fast to a tree branch, to insure the *Clytie* against drifting off while they were hunting for the rock-anchor.

Then, with one of the oil lamps, which were used

for signals in case the electrics gave out, the four girls went ashore. They easily found the proper stone near the water's edge, and making fast the rope to it, pushed the boat out a little way from the bank, and dropped the anchor overboard with a splash that awoke the echoes in that silent place.

"And now for supper, tea, dinner, breakfast, or whatever we choose to call it," suggested Sylvia, who seemed to have taken command of the situation. "What shall it be—tea or coffee? We have both," she added, for a hasty search among the lunch baskets had disclosed that fact.

"Coffee!" voted Rose. "It will help to keep us awake, and I don't want to close my eyes."

"Don't be silly!" scoffed Sylvia. "Be a real member of the Nowadays Club!"

"All right, I'll try," was the rather faint answer.

The alcohol stove, which burned the new solid fuel, was set going, and water, in a tiny kettle, was put on to boil. The girls busied themselves setting out the dishes and food on the folding table which was set up in the centre of the cabin, the seats, which later would become bunks, being ranged on either side.

"Now, could anything be more cosy than this?" asked Sylvia, when the kettle was humming.

"It *is* nice," assented Hazel. "If only Aunt Theodora knew we were here and all right, I would not worry so——"

Hazel's remarks were interrupted by such a wild,

weird cry, bursting out on the silence of the night, echoing and reverberating in the air all about them, that the girls involuntarily uttered screams, and huddled together in the cabin of the boat.

They stared at each other with fear-lustred eyes, and when Rose dropped a cup, letting it slip from her nerveless fingers so that it crashed into pieces on the cabin floor, it was rather a relief than otherwise of the tension.

Again came that wild, weird cry, something like the laugh of a maniac, or the defiant yell of a maddened beast. It started with a low cadence, rose to a shrill scream, and died away like the last blast from some siren whistle.

"What—what in the name of mercy was that?" gasped Hazel.

"Maybe—maybe some one—calling for us," whispered Rose.

"No human being would call that way," Alice declared, haltingly.

Again came the cry, eerie and nerve-racking. It seemed to be nearer the boat now.

"Perhaps campers trying to scare us," stammered Hazel.

"No one—man or boy—could yell that way," said Sylvia. "It must be——"

A third time came the cry—banshee-like in its weirdness. It was followed by a splash in the water, seemingly at the very bow of the *Clytie*.

"Oh!" screamed Rose, shrilly.

“Be still!” commanded Sylvia, and she laughed.

“She—she’s getting—hysterics! Oh, dear!” half-moaned Alice.

“Nonsense!” and Sylvia was laughing harder than ever. “It’s only a loon!”

CHAPTER XVII

IN CAMP

For a moment Sylvia's companions did not respond. They gazed at her as if wondering whether she had really said anything, or as if they did not know whether or not to believe her if she had made any utterance.

"What—what did you say?" asked Rose, at length.

"That was a loon," Sylvia went on. "A big bird, you know. They are great swimmers and divers, and they have the most awful screech you ever heard."

"Well, if *that* was a sample of it, I can well believe it!" said Hazel.

"Are you sure it was a loon?" asked Alice.

"Positive," declared Sylvia. "I knew what it was after I heard the third cry and the splash in the water."

"It must have been quite near our boat," ventured Rose.

"It was," went on Sylvia. "That's what made it sound so weird and terrifying."

"It sounded like a lost soul," murmured Hazel.

"Not that I know what sort of cries are emitted

by lost souls," she hastened to add, "but that is how I should describe it. I hope the loon doesn't come back and serenade us during the night."

"Don't you *dare* suggest such a thing!" exclaimed Rose. "It was like some one crying out in a horrible nightmare."

"I don't believe it will come back," Sylvia declared. "Sometimes there will be only one loon in a place, but if there are more, one calls to another and they make a terrible racket. I was camping with my father once, and that happened. I was a little girl, but I have never forgotten the loons. This one was probably after a fish. You know they dive into the water, and actually swim under it to get the fish they pursue. They are wonderful swimmers and divers."

"Well, I hope that one keeps on swimming and diving and that he'll be too busy to do any more yelling this night," said Hazel. "Ugh! He gave me the shivers."

"And I broke a cup," added Rose.

"Never mind, we have enough left for coffee," Sylvia remarked. "I guess the water is boiling now. Pass the sandwiches, girls, and see if there are any olives left."

"A whole big bottle, of lovely stuffed ones!" Alice reported, taking it out of a locker. "Where's the corkscrew?"

It was found, the simple meal was set forth on the table, and the girls gathered around it to eat, but

not without little, nervous glances over their shoulders now and then, at sounds in the nearby woods.

But gradually this feeling wore off, and the girls were more like themselves. That was one admirable trait of the Nowadays Girls: they could adapt themselves to almost any circumstances. They were very democratic, though that quality was not called for so much in this instance as was good, sound common sense.

"There, I feel a whole lot better," remarked Sylvia, as she pushed back her plate.

"So do I," added Hazel.

"And I'm not nearly so frightened," declared Rose.

"That's a blessing," Hazel said.

"Oh, you were just as alarmed as I was, Baby," retorted the Syracuse girl. "But, really, I wouldn't mind hearing that loon call again."

"Well, I certainly would!" Alice exclaimed. "Don't you *dare* invite him to call," and they all laughed.

The girls sat about the cabin, closing the sliding doors for comfort since the night air was chilling. They turned off all but one of the little incandescent lights, so the storage battery would last until morning. They left a single lantern burning outside on deck, "to scare away snakes," as Rose jokingly put it.

In spite of the determination of each one not to go to sleep, Nature was stronger than the will of

any of the girls, and at times each one felt herself nodding and dozing.

"I don't care!" Sylvia finally declared, with a sleepy yawn. "I am going to lie down. We'll all feel better in the morning, and there is nothing in the world to be alarmed about here. Let's 'turn in,' as the sailors say."

After a little hesitation, the other girls did likewise, and soon all four were peacefully slumbering on the seat bunks.

The rest did make them feel much fresher the next morning. They were awake early, to find the day a most glorious one, and there was coffee enough left for a refreshing cup.

After that they took turns in trying to start the motor. But the storage battery was used up without success, nor were their efforts at turning the fly-wheel over by hand any more successful.

"Well, we can pole ourselves along shore, and help will be easy to get in daylight," said Sylvia, cheerfully. "Come on, girls!"

They poled their way out of the little bay, where they had spent the night, and gradually worked their boat along the shore. They had not gone far before they heard a hail. It came from a large motor boat, containing several men, who had the look of typical Adirondack guides.

"I say, be you the lost young ladies?" was the cry.

"I think so. We *were* lost," Sylvia responded.

"Well, we're lookin' for you," the spokesman went on. "Lot of parties out from the Antlers. What's the matter?"

"Engine trouble," replied Sylvia, succinctly.

"I thought Aunt Theodora would start a search for us," remarked Hazel.

"It's a wonder she didn't come herself," Rose said.

"We'll give you a tow," went on the man at the wheel of the big motor boat. "We're only one of several searchin' parties. The lady you're with is out, too."

"I thought so!" Rose exclaimed. "Dear Aunt Theodora! Oh, but wasn't it awful of us to stay out all night!"

"I don't see how we could help it," Sylvia declared. "We certainly couldn't walk through the woods at night."

A little later they were being towed back to the hotel by the searching party, and had related to the kindly guides their experiences. Before they reached the dock another motor boat had sighted them, and came up at full speed.

"There's Aunt Theodora," called Sylvia. A handkerchief was vigorously waved, and four others answered it.

"Oh, girls, I was *much* worried about you!" the guardian said, kissing them all around. "Yet, somehow, I knew you would be all right. However, I organised searching parties, using all the boats

I could commandeer, and they've been out all night. Didn't you hear them whistling and calling?"

"All we heard was the loon," said Hazel.

Once again they told their story, and a little later they were back at their hotel.

"Was the dance nice?" asked Hazel, when she and her chums had changed to fresh garments.

"They didn't have it," Aunt Theodora said. "Every one was distracted about you, and a number of young men declared they would not dance while you were lost. They went out in a boat after you, and they haven't come back yet. I must say it was very nice of them."

"What? Not coming back?" asked Sylvia. "That isn't a bit nice. We want them to dance with us. Though it was a tribute to—shall I say our popularity?—to call off the hop."

"Hope they have it to-night," murmured Alice.

The young men returned, rather weary and forlorn, but the news that the lost ones had been found reached them before they arrived at the dock, so they came up singing and rejoicing.

That night the postponed dance was held.

"Oh, but weren't you girls frightened to death, staying out all alone that way?" asked Natalie, during an interval between dances.

"Not after we had gotten used to it," Sylvia said. "It was rather a lark."

"No, it was a *loon!*" corrected Alice, with a laugh.

"Say, little one, I think you're dancing too many

dances with one partner," commented Rose, turning to Hazel.

"How can I help it? He asks me before any of the other fellows have a chance—not that I want them, for he dances beautifully," said Hazel, with an assumed innocent air that became her well.

"Hopeless!" murmured Sylvia.

Then the music began a dreamy hesitation.

So delightful did the Nowadays Girls find their stay at the Antlers that they decided to prolong their visit another week. Sylvia received a message, saying that her brother was doing as well as could be expected, and this somewhat cheered her and Rose.

"And now what do you say to a few days in camp?" asked Mrs. Brownley, when she and her charges had returned one day from a long motor trip.

"Camp?" exclaimed Hazel.

"Yes. Mr. and Mrs. Parson are talking of going off to the woods to live in a tent, near a small lake not far from here, and they asked me if I thought you girls wouldn't like to join them. What shall I say?"

"Please accept for us," said Sylvia. "That is, if the others agree. It will give us a taste of real wilderness life. So different from hotel existence."

"But we can't have any dances," objected Alice.

"Oh, we can get along without them for a little while," Rose said.

"Well, if you can exist without a onestep, I'm

sure I can, or a half-and-half, either," declared Alice. "Ho, for the camp!"

"Do we have to do our own cooking?" asked Hazel.

"No, I believe they are going to take a cook along."

"So much nicer," murmured Sylvia, "though I have cooked in camp, and over an open fire. But I can't say I like it. When do we go, Aunt Theodora?"

"In a day or so. I'll go and tell Mrs. Parson you will accept their kind invitation."

So it was arranged. And a day or so later the little party went over to Shedd Lake, about four miles from Raquette Lake, there to live under canvas for perhaps a week.

CHAPTER XVIII

CANOEING

CAMP NATALIE it was named, in honour of the bride, though she blushinglly protested. But Sylvia and her chums insisted, and the name was built up in bark letters on a board, and suspended in the little open glade in front of the tents, which faced the blue waters of the lake.

The camp was a most complete and modern one. A man had been engaged to look after the putting up of the tents, and the arranging of all matters, so that the fun-lovers had really nothing to worry about. And the man had done his work well.

There were five canvas shelters in all, besides a small additional one near the cook tent, where slept the buxom woman who presided over the dishes, pots and pans.

A large tent that could be made open to the glorious breezes, or closed in case of stormy weather, served as the dining-room. The cooking was done in another tent, with a real stove, burning coal that was transported to camp in a wagon. For there is nothing more exasperating than to cook over a wood fire. Either it is too hot, or it has expired before the cook is aware of it, and has to be brought hastily

to life again to the detriment of the viands. So coal solved the problem.

Then there were three sleeping tents, with ample accommodations and the most modern of cots. In fact it was a most comfortable camp, and the Nowadays Girls, as well as Natalie and her husband, pronounced it to be perfect.

After setting the camp to rights, which was no small task, even though the cook and her husband, a guide, helped, there followed a somewhat lazy period. The girls went for strolls in the balsam-odorous woods, or sat on the shores of the little lake, looking at the view. Sometimes, when Rose was particularly pensive, Hazel or Alice would ask:

“Can’t you stop it?”

“Stop what?” she would ask, sometimes before she thought.

“Thinking of Roy.”

“Oh!” and she would blush rosy red.

“Well, I don’t blame her for thinking of him, if he’s as nice as his picture indicates,” said Natalie—for so all the girls called her. “I shall like him myself!”

“Oh!” exclaimed Hazel.

“In a perfectly brotherly way,” Natalie added, calmly. “In fact I almost think of him as a brother already.”

“He is awfully nice,” declared Alice. “He is such a dear boy, and it was too bad that this trouble had to come to him.”

"I do hope he will get over it," Natalie said.

"We all trust so," replied his sister. "It means so much to him in his success with that chemical firm. Roy really overworked, trying to solve some chemical problem, and that brought on a breakdown. Only that the doctor thought it best for us to keep away from him a little while, I should be with him now."

Rose did not say so, but doubtless she, too, wished she could help to minister to Roy. For between the two was a bond of more than mere friendship. And presently Rose went off by herself in the green and silent woods.

"Poor girl," murmured Natalie. "I know how she must feel. Bob was ill once—— But there, you don't want to hear about the troubles of an old married couple!" and her merry laugh rang out.

There were glorious days in the woods, at Camp Natalie. The girls went fishing a number of times, and explored little-travelled trails through the forest. But they did not go far enough to get lost, and Mrs. Rachlin was almost as expert in the woods as was her guide-husband. She led forth the little parties, after her work in camp was done, and many were the hidden mysteries of the forest that she laid bare.

Aunt Theodora, too, enjoyed this life in the open.

"I think, really," she said, in her precise little way, "that this is more educating than some trips to Europe. One gets so tired of following in the

beaten paths, even of knowledge. This is positively a revelation."

"I am so glad it isn't boring you," said Sylvia.

"Boring me! My dear, I would never be bored where you girls were!"

"Which is very nice for you to say, at any rate," laughed Hazel.

"Oh, I mean it!" declared "Guardy!" as the girls affectionately called Mrs. Brownley at times.

"Positively I'm ashamed of my appetite!" said Hazel, after one meal. "But, really, I never ate anything that tasted so good as the food does here. I think it must be the air."

"Or the cooking!" added Alice.

"The cooking certainly has much to do with it," declared Sylvia. "Mrs. Rachlin gets up some wonderful dishes. I really don't see how she does it with the limited means at her disposal."

"Oh, I'm used to rough cooking," said the person under discussion. "You girls are easy compared to lumbermen, and I've cooked for them when my husband has been in charge of a gang. They certainly can eat!" and she shook her head in remembrance.

The delights of the water added to the pleasure of the girls and their friends at Camp Natalie. They had sent for canoes, which were brought over on a wagon, and one day they set out to explore a small but rather rapid and turbulent stream connected with Shedd Lake.

The four Nowadays Girls, in two canoes, went off

by themselves, for Mrs. Brownley would not trust herself in one of the frail craft, and Natalie and Bob voted for a quiet and rather solitary stroll through the woods.

"Now do sit quiet, Rose," begged Sylvia, who was in the bow of one craft, while Rose was in the stern. Hazel and Alice were in like positions in another canoe.

"Sit quiet! Don't I always?" Rose demanded.

"You do except when you see an old stump or floating log and think it's an alligator!" Sylvia chided.

"As if she didn't know, by this time, that alligators are unknown reptiles in the Adirondacks," laughed Alice.

So they started off in the canoes, threading their way in and out along the winding stream, now floating lazily under some overhanging boughs, and again moving rapidly down some little stretch where the waters bubbled and foamed over the stones in such a manner as to have that particular section designated as "rapids."

"Look out, girls!" Sylvia called back to Alice and Hazel, whose canoe had dropped astern. "Here's a bad passage just ahead."

"All right. We see it!" answered Hazel.

"Now do sit steady, Rose!" pleaded Sylvia.

"Steady it is!" Rose answered, plying her paddle carefully.

Whether she disobeyed the injunction, or whether

she gave a wrong turn to the broad blade, will never be known, but just as the canoe was in the midst of the swirling water there was a sudden scream from Rose, echoing ones from Hazel and Alice, and the craft containing Sylvia and her chum rolled over, spilling them both out.

CHAPTER XIX

THE MASQUERADE

“STEADY! Back water!”

It was Hazel who gave the command, and the momentary feeling of panic that had swept over Alice passed.

“Over that way!” Hazel went on, nodding to indicate that she meant to steer their canoe toward a bit of still water, an eddy formed under an overhanging bank of the stream.

“All right!” was the tense reply of her chum, and a moment later the light craft shot past the rolling overturned one of Sylvia and Rose, and was in quiet water.

Meanwhile, after the first sudden plunge into the stream—a plunge that deprived them of their breath for an instant—the two girls who had been spilled out regained control of themselves.

The Nowadays Girls had the almost invaluable faculty of remaining cool, or quickly becoming cool in emergencies.

This had been proved in a number of instances in times past, when they had been in no little danger. Once there was an incipient fire at Miss Stevenson’s school, and the alarm drill was called for. It re-

mained for our four friends and a few others, to lead to safety the majority of the school, and for this bravery there had been no small thanks and honour.

So now, in this time of danger, the two girls who were in a place of safety remained calm and collected and were ready for rescue work. Fortunately, however, the water of the stream was not deep. It could hardly be so and fuss and foam over the rapids in the way it did. So Rose and Sylvia, after having been rolled over and over a number of times, during which period they clung to the paddles, found themselves in comparatively still water, and struck out for shore.

It was then that the wisdom of Hazel and Alice showed itself, for they were at the bank, waiting for their companions. There was no need for them to leap in to the rescue, for they saw that Sylvia and Rose were both swimming well, in spite of their wet and clinging garments. Their dresses were light summer ones, which were not much more hampering than bathing suits would have been. And they wore light, rubber-soled boating shoes.

"Catch hold!" cried Hazel, flinging to Rose, who was in advance of Sylvia, a long rope they carried in the canoe for mooring purposes. The coils straightened out, and the end of the line fell near the swimming girl.

"All right!" Rose answered, as she caught hold, and a moment later she was being pulled toward the

bank, suspending her swimming strokes, for she was a little exhausted, not only by her efforts, but by the rolling and tumbling process to which she had been subjected when the canoe upset.

"We'll be ready for you in a moment, Sylvia!" called Hazel.

"Don't worry, I can touch bottom," was the reassuring answer, and, to prove it, Sylvia stood up, a dripping and dishevelled figure, but a smiling one, nevertheless. It took more than a ducking to disturb Sylvia Pursell.

Rose, who had taken a little different course from that followed by her companion in misfortune, now found herself in water that was not so deep but that she could stand up, which she did, still keeping hold of the rope.

"Well," said Sylvia, finally, after she had caught her breath, and wrung enough water from her fallen hair so that it ceased to run in little rivulets down her face. "Well!"

"Most decidedly—well!" exclaimed Alice. "A very wet well indeed! How did it happen?"

"Don't ask me—ask Rose," laughed Sylvia. She could laugh now, though it had seemed serious enough for the moment.

"It wasn't my fault," her companion asserted, smiling across the water that separated them. Behind them foamed the little rapid, filling the air with its insistent murmur.

"I guess we didn't make allowances for the speed

and strength of the current," Sylvia said. "It seemed to grip the canoe in a moment."

"By the way, where is the canoe?" asked Hazel.

They looked down-stream, and saw their boat apparently moving by itself over the tops of the low bushes. It was turned upside down and was bobbing about in a most unaccountable manner.

"Look—look at that!" fairly gasped Alice, from her position on the bank.

"Why, what does it mean?" asked Hazel, faintly.

The four girls watched the canoe with increasing astonishment. It seemed to be moved by spirit hands, gliding, upside down, over the tops of the bushes in a curious undulating fashion.

"Could it have struck a rock, and bounced out on shore?" asked Rose.

"If it struck a rock with enough force for that, it would be in pieces, instead of whole, as it seems to be," Sylvia answered.

"But isn't it remarkable?" murmured Alice.

"To say the least—yes," agreed Rose.

Then, as the girls watched, the canoe seemed to sink down in the bushes, as a magician causes a certain card to appear from the centre of the pack, and to descend again.

"This must be seen to," Sylvia declared, with energy. "We can't have any white magic like this going on without making an investigation. Come on, Rose."

She started wading toward shore.

"Better wait until we pull Rose in, and then we'll fling you the rope," advised Alice.

"Oh, I don't need the rope, I can walk without that," declared Rose.

"Better not try," suggested Sylvia. "There may be some deep holes between here and shore. Keep hold of the rope, then I'll use it. And after that we'll see if our canoe has taken unto itself wings and flown away."

There was no need for the line from shore, as it developed, and soon Rose and Sylvia, after safely wading to the bank, joined their more fortunate companions. Alice and Hazel made fast their canoe, and Rose and Sylvia wrung as much water as possible from their skirts, then all four started toward the place where the canoe had been observed to so oddly nestle amid the underbrush.

The girls found a fairly good path along the shore, and following this, they turned in and out, as the trail led, bending itself to the curves of the stream, until they suddenly emerged into a small clearing.

And there, sitting by the canoe, which had been turned in a most favorable position so that the sun might dry it out, was a bronzed young man who was gravely contemplating his wet and dripping legs that were clad in khaki trousers.

"Oh!" exclaimed Sylvia, faintly, as she saw the young man slowly turn his head in the direction of the sound caused by the girls pushing their way past the bushes that overhung the trail.

"So, *that* was what made the canoe behave in such a mysterious way!" murmured Hazel.

"He must have pulled it out of the water," suggested Alice.

Rose stood looking at the young man, saying nothing.

As for the youth himself, he rose to his feet, thereby disclosing the fact that he was rather tall. He wore no hat, but a half-military salute toward his brown, curling hair made up for what doubtless would have been a deferential removal of his head-gear had he worn any.

"Are you looking for a lost, strayed or otherwise missing canoe?" he asked, at the same time motioning toward the one on the grass near him.

"Yes, that is ours," said Sylvia. "We had an upset in the rapids."

"I guessed as much," the stranger said. "I was about to go in search of the owners, fearing some accident might have happened, but you have saved me a journey. Perhaps I can be of some assistance?"

"Thank you, I believe we are all right now," Sylvia said. "We held on to our paddles. We——"

She started forward, as though to prove her claim to the canoe by exhibiting the paddles, but Rose pulled her back.

"Don't go!" came the half-frantic whisper. "You're a sight, and so am I! Let Hazel and Alice walk ahead. They aren't dripping wet and their hair

isn't hanging seven ways for Sunday. Let them go ahead!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Sylvia, comprehendingly. "Yes, I guess you're right, Rose. We don't look exactly presentable."

The young man had waited inquiringly as this little discussion was in progress, and if he understood the nature of it he gave no sign.

Concealed by the friendly and effectual screen of bushes the change was made, bringing Alice and Hazel into the vanguard, and letting Sylvia and Rose take up a position in the rear. A hasty glance over the trail they had come showed no enemy at their backs, and they were sufficiently guarded by underbrush on either side of the path to prevent a flank attack.

"I'll put the canoe back in the stream for you, in a few minutes," the young man went on. "I was letting the water drain out of it. I was fishing just about here," he said, "when I saw it coming downstream. I guessed what had happened and waded out to get it. Then I put it over my head and took it to shore."

"Oh! That was what made it look so funny!" exclaimed Hazel.

"Funny?" the young man questioned.

"We could only see the boat from where we were," explained Alice, "and it looked as though it were floating on top of the bushes, upside down."

"Oh, I see," he went on, comprehendingly. "You

couldn't see me because my head was under the canoe, and you couldn't see the rest of me because the bushes formed a screen. Yes, it must have been rather odd."

"It was," said Sylvia, and she could not restrain a merry laugh.

"Oh!" exclaimed the young man, and it seemed as though the laugh had come in answer to some question he asked himself. And the question might have been in regard to the disappearance of the two wet and dripping girls he had first observed, for Alice and Hazel were now in front of Rose and Sylvia.

"It was very good of you to save the canoe," Hazel said. "It might have been dashed to pieces on the rocks."

"Oh, it was past the danger spot when I got it," the youth said, with a smile that seemed to illuminate his brown face. "Don't credit me with too much. I just grabbed it as it was floating past."

"I'm afraid we spoiled your fishing," said Alice, at the same time voicing to her chums a hoarsely whispered aside to the effect: "Why don't you two do something? Going to leave it all to Hazel and me?"

"What shall we say?" demanded Rose.

"Oh, say 'pleased to meet you,' if you can't think of anything else," retorted Alice.

"Are you sure I can't do anything for you?" the youth asked, as he prepared to put the canoe over his head and shoulders, in the most approved guide

"carry" position, and start for the water with it. "I'd like to help you."

"Thank you, we are all right," Alice said. "We are going back to camp."

"Oh, then you are camping here?" he asked, and Rose said afterward that his voice had a "hopeful" sound.

"Just for a little while," Hazel answered, waving her hand indefinitely toward the woods.

"Ah, I see. I'm a camper also," he added, but he gave no further information about himself.

"If I might suggest," he said, as he shouldered the light canoe, "it might be better for me to take this for you past the rapids. They are rather hard to traverse up-stream, and they are high from the rain. You won't have any trouble once you get past the rough place, however. Let me put the boat in the water for you a little farther up."

"Oh, that is entirely too much trouble!" protested Sylvia.

"No, indeed!" he said, quickly. "I'm glad to be able to help you."

The girls turned to go back along the trail they must follow in order to get past the rapids. This turn brought Sylvia and Rose in the rear, and directly behind them was the youth with the canoe.

"Oh!" exclaimed Rose, as she thought of her dripping garments and dishevelled hair. It was the very thing they had sought to avoid.

"He can't see us with the canoe over his head,"

declared Sylvia. "If we change now he'll laugh! Go on!"

And go on they did.

The other canoe was found safely floating in the deep eddy where it had been moored, and a little later the one that had overturned, now righted and comparatively dry, was put in the stream at a point past the rapids.

"Now I'll carry the other one there for you, and you won't have much trouble paddling back," the young man said. And in spite of the rather half-hearted protests of the girls, this he did.

By this time the warm sun and the wind had done much toward drying the garments of Sylvia and Rose. And they had managed to put up their hair in some sort of fashion that, though they did not realize it, was wonderfully becoming.

"Now I think you'll be all right," the young man said, when the four girls, in the two boats, were ready to paddle back.

"Yes, indeed. And thank you *so* much!" said Sylvia, warmly. Her thanks were echoed in a chorus by the others.

Again with that graceful, half-military salute toward his bared head, the bronzed youth watched them paddle away. And it was not until they were around the bend of the stream that Alice exclaimed:

"Oh, we never asked his name!"

"Nor told ours!" added Hazel.

"Why should we?" demanded Sylvia.

"Oh, I don't know," was Hazel's slow retort.

They paddled slowly back to camp, where Mrs. Brownley was not a little exercised over the upset.

"It was nothing!" Sylvia said. "We get used to such things nowadays."

This was really the only little accident that marred the camping outing, and that did not so much mar it as it marked it. Two or three days afterward the girls went canoeing, and successfully passed the rapids. But they saw nothing of the young man. Indeed, though the eyes of all four roved through the woods and along the wilderness trails, not one would admit that she was looking for anything or any one in particular.

Then came the day when they went back to the Antlers. They had spent a glorious week in the woods.

As the campers reached the porch, to be made welcome by their hotel friends, they saw a group gathered about the bulletin board.

"I wonder what that means?" asked Rose.

"Let's look," suggested Sylvia.

They found it was an announcement of a masquerade dance to be given two nights hence.

"Oh, we simply must go to that!" cried Hazel.

"Surely!" agreed Alice.

"But what about costumes?" asked Rose.

"We'll make our own. Masks will be easy to get, I fancy," Sylvia said. "We'll make inquiries."

They found that masks of various sorts were easily

obtainable, and some costumes also, though most of the ladies were going to make their own, out of simple materials.

Preparations for the masque fête went merrily on, and none took more interest in it than our Nowadays Girls.

"The usual penny," said Rose, suddenly, one day, as the four sat in Sylvia's room, sewing. Rose looked at Hazel as she thus challenged her.

"Penny? For what?"

"Your thoughts, of course. You're in a brown study and the shade doesn't at all match your dress."

"Oh, I was thinking——" Hazel stopped suddenly.

"She was thinking of the young man of the woods," declared Sylvia, with a laugh.

CHAPTER XX

THE MYSTIC MOON

SOFTLY the musicians played behind a bank of palms. Softly shone the mystic moon outside, brighter even than the lights of the ballroom, for they had been turned low, since it was not yet the hour to trip the light fantastic. The melody came only in haunting strains, a ripple from the piano as the player tried the keys in some snatch of a onestep, the half-sobbing voice of the violin in a haunting, dreamy waltz, the mellow trill of the flute, and the more military sound of the French horn. The musicians were making ready.

Now and then, through the corridors of the hotel flitted strange figures. Figures whose faces were concealed by masks. They glided here and there, into rooms and out again.

And of mysterious import were many whispered messages that floated up and down the corridors.

"Have you any more powder?"

Surely a strange "engagement" that needed powder on a night like that.

"I want some pins!"

"I shall have to take a tuck in it."

"My slippers will never stay on when I get to dancing!"

"Use a rubber band around your instep. It won't show much!"

"Do you think he'll know me?"

"Never—not in that!"

"Oh, but he saw me getting it!"

"He thought it was for me. He'll take me for you and——"

"Oh, I don't know that I want that!"

And so on.

It was the night of the masquerade, a night full of promises of surprise, a night of mystery, of mystic moonlight. The big hotel was thronged, for invitations had been general, and from many other camps and places in Raquette Lake had come the merry-makers and dancers.

"Well, are you almost ready?" asked Sylvia, as she slipped into the room of Alice, not wearing her mask, for the Nowadays Girls and Mrs. Brownley had a private hall to themselves.

"Almost, yes. How do you like my dress?"

"It's perfect. I never thought you could get such a stunning effect from that calico and creton."

Alice was a Dresden shepherdess, and a sweet and dainty figure she made.

"Your own costume is a dream, Sylvia!"

"I'm glad it isn't a nightmare," was the laughing retort. Sylvia was attired as Night in a black dress, spangled with stars, and quarter moons. It became her wonderfully well. Her black mask dangled from her hand. Soon it would be time to don it.

Rose was a Columbine, in a voluminous clown suit of white with black spots, and a peaked hat, while Baby Reed was Little Miss Muffit.

The girls hoped they had kept their secrets well, and that none of the hotel guests had discovered the designs of their costumes. Mrs. Brownley was to go just as herself, in common with some of the other matrons of the hotel, who would act as chaperons and patronesses of the dance, which was for a local charity.

Louder sounded the entrancing music. The strains of it penetrated to the room of our friends, and set their feet to tapping the floor impatiently.

"Aren't you ready yet, Rose?" asked Sylvia; for they were waiting for some last touches to be put to her dress by one of the chambermaids.

"Yes—coming!"

They went out, masked, to the main hall, to find themselves in a gay throng of other maskers, who were attired with more or less historic semblance to represent characters, past, present and future. This was the ladies' dressing floor. The gentlemen were on the one below.

There were murmurs of "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" as Sylvia and her chums came from their rooms.

"Those are the four girls!" came in whispers from various corners, with the accent on "the."

"Where's Natalie?" asked Hazel, in a low voice, of Sylvia. "She wanted to go down with us."

"She and her husband are going as Jack and Jill,"

explained Sylvia. "But don't mention it. She doesn't want it known that she is married."

"Has she taken off her wedding ring?" Alice asked.

"Indeed not! Brides don't do that. But she is going to wear gloves. There she is now."

A charming "Jill" came out of a room and joined the four girls.

There sounded a crash of music from the ballroom floor.

"Oh, come on!" begged Hazel. "We're missing it."

As they passed the floor where the gentlemen were costuming, a group passed down the broad staircase. There were clowns, tramps, gallants of the thirteenth century, courtiers, Puritans, aviators, sailors, soldiers and what-not.

Down the stairs hustled and bustled the masqueraders, eager to throng into the place whence the music came. It was a hesitation waltz, and Sylvia presently found herself whirling through it with a Spaniard who danced wonderfully well.

"Do you do the Marcel?" he asked, looking intently at her as if to pierce her identity through her mask.

"Yes," she said, trying to speak unnaturally, for she suspected her partner was a certain young man staying at the Antlers.

He whirled her about in the pivot, glided first on her right side, and then, after a hesitation, to the



SYLVIA PRESENTLY FOUND HERSELF WHIRLING THROUGH
IT WITH A SPANIARD WHO DANCED WONDERFULLY WELL

left, again whirling into the waltz. She knew this dance perhaps better than any of the newest new ones, and she was not a little gratified when her partner remarked:

"That was beautifully done. Don't you like it?"

"Indeed, yes. It is such a change from the plain hesitation."

They found themselves in a crush, and had to "lame duck" it for a few steps until they found themselves free again.

"Do you know what that reminds me of?" he asked, as they passed the palm-screened corner where the musicians were playing.

"What?" she asked.

"The hesitation. It reminds me of a canoe gracefully overturning in the rapids——"

"What! You?" she cried, astonished.

"Even so, O Night!" He spoke dramatically. "I thought I should find you again, but I looked for a Niobe."

"Why, because I was all water?"

"Somewhat, yes. May I have the next dance?"

"I—I am not so sure——"

"You had better be. Come out on the veranda. The moon is glorious." The music had stopped, and as there had already been two encores there would be no more.

Sylvia, her heart beating rather fast, stepped out of the low windows to the porch whereon were many strolling couples. Sylvia was on her guard. After

all it might be one of the hotel guests who had heard the story of the upset.

A figure that Sylvia recognised as that of Alice came up to her, but stopped on seeing her with the Spaniard.

"Oh!" she exclaimed.

"Yes?" asked Sylvia.

"Nothing now, I'll speak to you later."

"Oh, I'll leave you," said the Spaniard, quickly.

"Remember, I have the new dance, O Night," he said, and with a bow he was gone.

"Who is it?" asked Alice, in a whisper.

"The young man who saved our canoe."

"Really?"

"So he says."

"You can't believe a word they say. Did you have a nice dance?"

"Lovely! And you?"

"Perfect. I'm engaged for the next one. Are you?"

"Well, if he insists on claiming it I can hardly say no. And he really *does* dance beautifully. Have you seen Rose or Hazel?"

"Yes, they were enjoying themselves, evidently. I want some pins. Have you any?"

Alice was supplied, and went to the dressing-room. Sylvia was looking for Hazel or Rose, when the music started up again. She saw a grotesquely attired Dutchman approaching, and wondered if he would ask her to dance.

He did.

"This is ours, I believe, O Night," he murmured.

"Yours? I—er—I——"

"I am the knight of the overturned canoe, who wore no hat," he said, in a low voice.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS

SYLVIA did not know what to say. There were two explanations possible—perhaps more, but two certainly.

One was that the Spaniard had hastily changed his costume, or else that there were two young men who had penetrated her disguise, and were conversant at least with the episode of the overturned canoe. And both explanations were feasible.

“I—er—I half promised this dance,” murmured Sylvia. “I told——”

“Yes, and I am he whom you told,” was the answer.

“He was a——”

“Yes, I know. But pardon me for pointing out that we are missing part of it,” and he led her in through the low window to the ballroom. It was a onestep, and Sylvia could not judge, from the style of her partner’s dancing, whether or not he was the same one she had had in the hesitation.

“I trust you did not take cold,” he said, “from your immersion.”

“Oh, no, not at all,” Sylvia said. She and her chums had been reasonably sure that the camping

accident was known only to a few in the hotel, for it had been made light of, and canoe upsets were far too common to make much fuss over. And yet if this were not the young man who had rescued the canoe he must be some one of the boarders at the Antlers who knew more about the episode than had been given out by the participants.

"And why did he change his costume, when he practically acknowledged who he was?" Sylvia asked herself.

"I hope you did not tire yourself carrying the canoes?" she remarked, casually, after a period of silence.

"I? Oh, no. Not in the least. Do you do the aëroplane in this dance?"

"Yes."

"Shall we——?"

"If you please."

He swung her into it with ease and grace. Then she was sure from his manner of stepping at her side that this was the same dancer who had been with her in the hesitation. But why had he changed his costume? That was a question which she could not answer.

The music stopped, but there was at once an insistent applauding for an encore, which, after a few seconds of waiting, came.

"Is your camp near here?" Sylvia asked.

"Not far away. Is yours?"

"No, not now."

Evidently he did not know she was a hotel guest. The mystery deepened.

"Would it be asking too much to crave the next number?" he murmured, when the last encore had been danced out.

"Well, I—er—I——"

"Oh, not if you are engaged!" he hastily interposed.

Sylvia was not, but she knew there would be no trouble in getting a partner.

"I shall see you again, anyhow," he said, as he bowed and walked off. Alice, Hazel and Rose found Sylvia standing on the porch in the brilliant moonlight.

"Oh, I had the loveliest dance!" Rose said, clapping her hands. "He showed me some new steps. He was dressed as a Spaniard and he was the same fellow who saved our canoe for us."

"He—he was?" gasped Sylvia. "Do you mean just now?"

"No, he didn't save our canoe just now. I mean when we were in the rapids."

"But did you just dance this onestep with him—with a Spaniard?"

"I certainly did."

"And did he claim to be the Knight of the Upset Canoe?"

"No, he didn't claim to be anything of the sort. But I knew from what he said that he was the one. I wonder how he knew me?"

Sylvia's brain was in a whirl. Who was the Dutchman?

"Why do you ask?" Rose wanted to know.

"Oh, nothing in particular. I'll tell you later. Here's a fox trot. I wonder——"

Three young men, as if moved by a common impulse, came fairly charging down on Alice, Rose and Hazel. The Spaniard was not one of them.

Sylvia wondered if she was to be left out, for none of the three approached her.

However, the music had played but a few more measures when Sylvia saw approaching her a masker in the red suit and face-covering of Mephistopheles. She felt a little thrill as it became evident that he meant to claim her as his partner.

"Aren't you dancing?" he asked, extending his hands in an invitation.

"Well, I——" Sylvia seemed strangely non-committal this evening.

"Then may I have the honour? I danced with you before, I believe."

"Oh, no," she answered, as he led her toward the ballroom.

"Oh, but yes!" he insisted, with a laugh. "I am perhaps attired for something a little out of my—shall we say—element," he went on, "but surely you have not forgotten the Knight of the Overturned Canoe?" his voice questioned.

"You—you—surely you are not he!"

"Even so, O Night!"

“But you—your——”

They were fox-trotting toward the musicians, and as Sylvia was not quite sure of the sequence of the steps in this dance—at least with this partner—she deferred continuing her remarks until she had found out just how he did it.

“Here is a new one, perhaps,” he said, as they found themselves in a rather secluded corner, secluded for the moment. They had just finished the two-step glide part of the fox trot. “It’s a slide forward, a slide back, two counts each, another slide forward, a draw on two counts and a hop on the fourth,” he explained.

He executed it as he spoke, and Sylvia grasped it almost at once.

“Like it?” he asked.

“Yes, indeed. It’s quite novel. Where did you learn that?”

“In New York.”

“Oh, you’re from there?”

“When I’m not in the woods, saving canoes.” He laughed in a boyish fashion. Sylvia looked into his eyes, but they told her nothing.

Sylvia glanced around the room. She saw neither the Spaniard nor the Dutchman. Clearly then this must be he who had masqueraded as both. And yet why his triple change of costume? There seemed to be no need of it.

Sylvia determined to find out about it, but not now. She would not give him the satisfaction of asking too

many questions. But she resolved to do a bit of detective work in the interval between this and the next dance.

The fox trot ended in the tapping accompaniment by the drummer, and the musicians, who had given three encores, refused another.

"Will you have an ice?" asked Mephistopheles.

Sylvia assented. There was quite a crush in the refreshment room, but her partner managed to worm his way through, and procured for her a plate of cream and some cakes.

"If you will excuse me," he murmured, "I will claim the next dance; if I may?"

"Are you going to——"

"See some of my friends," he finished for her, not giving her a chance to intimate that he was going to change his costume again. "I see yours approaching," he added, and Sylvia looked up to note the approach of Alice, Hazel and Rose, each with an escort.

"Oh, you have been provided for," murmured Alice, as she saw Sylvia nibbling a macaroon under her mask, which came only to her lips.

"Yes, I had Mephistopheles."

"We saw you," whispered Rose.

"A lovely dancer," added Hazel.

"Who is he?" Alice wanted to know.

Sylvia shook her head, as the three young men, variously disguised, came back with refreshments for the other girls.

"I had a queer Dutchman for the first half of

this dance, and then he excused himself and brought up a Spaniard," said Hazel.

"You—you did!" gasped Sylvia. She was more puzzled than ever, for she had seen neither of her two former partners on the floor.

"Both dandy dancers," Hazel went on.

There was a little wait and then another strain of music proclaimed the beginning of another hesitation. The three young men who had brought the girls to the refreshment room, escorted them back to the dance floor, and with murmured pleas that they must seek other partners, left them.

Almost at once, however, there bore down on Alice, Hazel and Rose, respectively a Spaniard, a Dutchman and Mephistopheles.

Sylvia gasped her surprise, but a moment later it was added to, for a thirteenth-century cavalier, with glossy black curls flowing over his lace collar, approached, and with a low bow, said:

"The Knight of the Overturned Canoe craves a dance with thee, O Night!"

Sylvia wondered where it would all end, and, almost as if in a dream, she accepted his arm and went out on the floor.

CHAPTER XXII

BAD NEWS

THE music was entrancing—a dreamy waltz was being played. There was the odour of flowers. All about were presumably pretty women and girls—presumably, for their masks still hid their faces. Outside the moon shone, still bewitchingly. From behind the bank of palms, which stirred gently in the night air that swept in through the open windows, came the wailing of the oboe, the shriller crying of the violin, the tinkle of the piano, the bird-like notes of the flute, the mellow call of the French horn—all blending together in a strain that, without conscious effort, seemed to move one into the mazy whirl of the waltz.

Almost before she knew it Sylvia found herself moving about in company with the cavalier, and it was a delightful motion, for, like the other three mysterious Knights of the Canoe, he was an excellent dancer.

“I have been waiting for this opportunity, O Night,” he whispered in Sylvia’s little ear that was half hidden by her hair.

“Yes?” she replied, non-committally. “Do you mean you, or some of your friends?”

"I don't know what you mean," he answered, feigning ignorance.

"Oh, yes, you do," she said, as she put out her hand to ward off an unskilful couple who were going around the wrong way of the room.

"Upon my honour——"

"Swear not at all, especially in this moonlight!" she mocked.

"It *is* glorious; isn't it?"

"Perfect."

"Would you rather dance, or go out where we can see——"

"Dance," she said, shortly. She was going to take no chances of any practical, or impractical, jokes being played in the shimmering and inconstant moonlight.

"The moon will last—the music not," he said, softly, and they swept on around the room in a slow, graceful glide.

Sylvia, as she confessed afterward, was just "dying" to ask her cavalier what it all meant—the four claimants to the title of Knight of the Overturned Canoe, each of whom had appeared in a different costume. But she refrained. She felt that the mystery would reveal itself in due season.

Were there four young men? Was it not the same one all the while, who had changed disguises with his friends, and so managed to claim Sylvia in a different garb each time? She could not be sure.

Yet there was an indefinable something different in

the dancing of each of her four partners. She was almost sure they could not be the same.

"Are you staying at the Antlers much longer?" the cavalier asked, as the music came to an end, and the dancers vigorously begged for an encore.

"I am not sure," she answered. "Why?"

"Oh, I just wanted to know. There is another dance next week."

"A masquerade?"

"No. I wish it were."

"So that you could hide your identity further?"

"Don't you know who I am?" he teased.

"Of course. You are Harry Blair," and she purposely named at random a certain young man stopping at the hotel.

"Right—not!" he laughed. "You don't believe I saved your canoe?"

"There are too many claimants to the——"

"Honour," he hastily interposed. "Don't hesitate to say it."

"Oh, it wasn't that, so much as it was——"

The music cut in on their talk with a blare of drum and trumpet, and once more they were off in the dance.

"What were you going to say?" he persisted, when there came a lull.

"Nothing of any consequence."

And so the small talk went on. There came more numbers, and the cavalier, the Dutchman, Mephistopheles and the Spaniard danced in turn with Sylvia,

Rose, Hazel and Alice. The other three girls were as puzzled as Sylvia had been.

"Who can they be?" asked Hazel, when they were in the dressing-room, just before the signal for unmasking was to be given.

"Haven't the least idea," Sylvia replied.

"Do you really think they can be one and the same young fellow who helped us with the canoes?" Rose demanded. "Or is there more than one?"

"What do you mean?" asked Alice.

"Well, they might have changed clothes, and certainly one could tell the other enough details so that all would know just what happened that day," Rose insisted.

"We'll soon know," Sylvia said. "There they are, all four together, and they're looking this way as if they expected us to come out. They're going to give the signal to unmask!"

It was on the stroke of twelve, and the trumpeter had come to the edge of the music platform to sound the call that would mean the revealing of identities hitherto hidden.

"Let's not go out," suggested Rose.

"The idea!" Alice cried. "When they're such good dancers? Much better than any of the fellows at the hotel. I wonder who they can be? It's such fun!"

Sylvia gazed out of a window into the moonlight, and wondered also. She rather liked the title, "Knight of the Overturned Canoe," but she felt sure

that only one was entitled to it—and that one, somehow or other, she felt was the last partner she had danced with—the cavalier. He had rather a masterful way with him.

The trumpet blared out. There was a moment of silence, then came the taking off of masks, and gasps of astonishment vied with peals of merriment, for there were many surprises.

Sylvia kept her eyes fixed on the group of four young men, the Dutchman, the Spaniard, Mephistopheles and the cavalier. They unmasked together, and, in a straight line, like the advance of some guard of soldiers, came toward the Nowadays Girls.

“Oh, I feel like—running away!” murmured Rose, her cheeks hot with blushes.

“Don’t you dare!” said Alice. “They all look like nice fellows.”

Sylvia gave a quick glance at the cavalier. Yes, she was right. He was the Knight of the Overturned Canoe, the same bronze-faced youth with crisp, curling hair. He smiled at her, showing two rows of white, even teeth.

Sylvia smiled in welcome.

The other three were evidently his chums, for there existed, it seemed, a jolly and excellent understanding among them. In a solid phalanx they advanced toward the girls.

“Shall we dance with them?” inquired Alice.

“Better wait until they ask us,” suggested Hazel.

“Oh, they’ll *ask* us all right,” Sylvia said. “Any-

how, this is a Paul Jones, and we'll naturally have to dance with a lot of strangers. It is perfectly all right, I think."

"So do I," declared Rose, with a new conviction.

"She likes that Spaniard," laughed Hazel.

"He dances beautifully," Rose confessed, blushing more vividly than ever.

"May I have the honour?" asked the cavalier, advancing to Sylvia.

She nodded and smiled.

"So there was but one real, true knight?" she murmured, when they were dancing.

"Only one, O Night, and you will find him very true," he whispered, rather earnestly.

Sylvia laughed, and it seemed to vie with the mellow notes of the flute.

"What's the joke?" she asked. "I mean, how did you four manage it?"

"I'll tell you, out in the moonlight, after this dance."

She rather regretted it when a new figure in the Paul Jones separated him from her. And she was a little impatient for the promised explanation. In due time it came. The dance ended, and the different couples strolled to various resting-places.

Sylvia noticed that Rose was with the Spaniard, Hazel with the Dutchman and Alice with Mephistophelès. The three girls followed Sylvia out to the piazza.

"Well," began the cavalier, "I suppose you girls

have been doing all sorts of wondering. We hope you'll forgive the little joke. You see there are really four of us. We have a camp over near Shedd Lake, and I was lucky enough to be on hand that day when your canoe upset," and he nodded at Sylvia and Rose.

"When I went back and told the boys, guessing that you were stopping at the Antlers, we decided to come to this masquerade, and see if we could not mystify you a bit. I gave my chums all the details of the canoe episode, so they could talk about it as well as I, and we each one, in turn, decided to pretend he was the only and original Knight of the Overturned Canoe.

"Which we did, to the best of our ability. We hope we are forgiven. If you want proper introductions to us——"

He broke off to give the names of himself and his companions. They had friends stopping at the hotel, and very soon the girls were formally presented, Aunt Theodora also meeting the youths, and unconsciously expressing her satisfaction with them.

"There goes the music!" exclaimed Rose, after the refreshments, the four girls having been escorted thereto by the four camping chums.

"Yes, don't let's miss any of it," said the Spaniard. Once more they were dancing.

"But what I don't understand," said Sylvia, "is why you came last."

She was speaking to the cavalier—the real Knight.

"It was this way, Princess," he said, laughingly. "I could not reach here the same time as did the other fellows, so I made them each promise in turn to dance with you first, and, by an implied engagement, keep you until I came. I arrived in the nick of time."

"And at one time I thought there was only one of you, and that you changed your costume after every dance," Sylvia said. "Well, it was an enjoyable surprise."

"Then you are not angry?"

"Of course not!"

He was very good-looking, and a fine dancer. Sylvia was only human.

The masquerade was almost over. Sylvia was walking out on a moonlit path with the cavalier, who was finding out more about her than she imagined she was telling.

"Sylvia, where are you?" called Mrs. Brownley.

"Here, Aunt Theodora. I'm coming right in. I suppose you'll say it is too damp."

"No, my dear! But a telephone message just came for you. I took it, as I could not find you. It was from——"

"My brother!" gasped Sylvia, and her grasp tightened on the arm of her escort.

"Yes, it was about your brother," said Mrs. Brownley, in rather solemn tones. "He is not so well. You are to call up on long-distance, my dear."

CHAPTER XXIII

AT SARANAC

SYLVIA walked toward the hotel office, where the telephone booths were located.

"I am so sorry!" murmured the cavalier. "If there is anything I can do—or my chums—don't fail to let us know. We'd be only too glad to help."

"Thank you," Sylvia said. "I shall be glad to let you know. But I think it will mean that I shall have to go to my brother. He is up at Saranac."

"I shall be sorry to see you leave," he said, simply. "And I hope you and your friends will return."

"It is impossible to say, at least for a time," was her answer. "I will say good-night now."

He understood, and parted from her.

"Was it anything definite?" asked Sylvia of Aunt Theodora.

They were approaching the telephone booths, and Sylvia was a bit nervous.

"I did not wait for all the details," said the chap-eron. "I thought it better to let you talk. Central said the line would be available if you called up within a few minutes, as they are not very busy now."

"With whom were you speaking?"

"With that young man who went up with your brother."

“Harry Montray?”

“Yes. He said there was nothing to be alarmed about, but he thought Roy had gotten to the point where it would be better to see some one from home. Probably the poor fellow is suffering from an attack of good, old-fashioned home-sickness—or, rather, bad home-sickness, for it is a dreadful feeling. I have had it abroad, when I felt as though I would give anything just to see an old tin peddler from my home town.”

“I know,” murmured Sylvia.

In a few minutes she was in conversation with her brother's friend. She was much reassured to know that, though Roy was not so well as could be hoped for, he was in no sense in danger. It was just that his companion felt, in Roy's present mental state, that it would be better to have some one of his family near him. His physical health was good, but he had not been able to bring to his mind the lost chemical formula. And this preyed on him.

“I will come up at once,” Sylvia said. “We will start in the morning.”

“I will help you make all preparations,” Mrs. Brownley remarked. “Will you take the other girls with you?”

“Of course; if they want to go.”

“As if we didn't want to go!” exclaimed Alice, when the matter was mentioned to her and her chums. “Besides, that's what we came up here for. This lingering in pleasant places was no part of our orig-

inal programme, nice as it is. You want to go; don't you, Hazel?"

"Certainly."

"And there's no need to ask Rose," said Alice, but it was not in the least done jokingly. Rose's face precluded anything like that.

And so the masquerade came to an end rather sadly, and yet Sylvia tried not to let it affect her too much, for she regarded herself in the light of a hostess to her three chums.

Before the girls retired, a message came to them from the four young men with whom they had danced so much that evening. It was to the effect that the campers expected to remain some time longer at, or near, Raquette Lake, and would be very glad to entertain the young ladies if they returned.

Sylvia sent back word, expressing the appreciation of herself and her chums, but said their plans were not settled, and it was hardly possible that they would come back to Raquette that summer.

They were to take a morning train, and there was not much of the night left in which to get rest. Sylvia herself had very little sleep, and was up, almost at dawn, packing her trunks.

They were to go to Saranac Inn, located on Upper Saranac Lake, as Roy's place of sojourn, Loneberg Camp, was located near there. The journey of the girls was to be by rail, though they had hoped to make the trip by canoes and other boats—steamers and motor craft.

"But we really haven't time," decided Sylvia. "Perhaps we can come back that way, but it will be better to go by train, I think."

"Yes," assented Rose. "It's quicker."

It was rather a surprise to Sylvia and her chums to find, that morning, the four young men who had danced with them waiting on the broad veranda when they came down to go to the station.

"Why!" exclaimed Sylvia, blushing rosy-red. "How did you get over from your camp so early?"

"We haven't been to camp," replied Felton Ware—he who had been disguised as the cavalier.

"Did you stay at the Antlers all night?" asked Hazel.

"Yes, we couldn't very well get back to camp," said James Pendleton, who had been the Dutchman.

"And we thought we might be of some service to you," went on Felton. "Are you sure there isn't anything we can do?"

"Thank you, no," Sylvia murmured. "We are used to travelling, you know, and one of our club mottoes is 'Do it yourself.'"

"What club is that?" he asked, interested at once.

"The Nowadays Club," answered Alice. "It's real jolly."

"I can well believe that," agreed Felton.

The young men insisted on accompanying the girls to the station, carrying their satchels. The trunks had been sent on ahead by an earlier train.

There were rather prolonged good-byes at the

depot, and Sylvia was quite sure she heard Alice and Hazel agreeing to send, from Saranac, at least souvenir postals to their friends. But she was not absolutely sure, and her mind was too fully occupied with thoughts of her ailing brother to allow her to dwell long on what others did and said.

"Well, here comes the train," said Felton, finally.

"And I'm glad of it!" murmured Sylvia, with something like a sigh.

"What!" he cried, with simulated surprise.

"Oh, you know what I mean," she went on.

"I hope you have no more canoe accidents," said Felton.

"Well, if I do, I hope I find as nice a knight as you were," she answered, rather daringly.

"That's awfully nice!" he exclaimed, with real pleasure in his voice.

Then the train came in, and there was the usual bustle and hustle getting aboard. Good-byes were said over and over again, and hands, caps and handkerchiefs were waved until the coaches were out of sight around a bend in the line.

The four young men walked away, rather downcast, for they had thoroughly enjoyed the company of Sylvia and her chums.

"Well, old man," said James Pendleton to Felton Ware.

"Not well—ill," he sighed.

"What's the matter?" laughed a companion.

"Hard hit?"

"Not at all. Only they were such real, jolly girls. You don't often meet their class up here. The others are too much on dolling-up and talking society mush. I wonder what some of those dolled-up ones would look like if they were rolled out of a canoe into the rapids; tell me that!"

"It's beyond me," was the honest confession. "Never mind. Maybe they'll come back."

"Let us hope so," was the decision, in which all agreed.

Meanwhile Sylvia and her chums were speeding as fast as the train could take them to Saranac. They had engaged rooms by telegraph at Saranac Inn, and from there they would start for Roy's camp, which was some miles away.

"Will you go on to-night?" asked Rose of Sylvia, as they sat together in the train.

"It depends on what time we get in. If we arrive early enough I shall, provided we can get back to the Inn at any reasonable hour. I don't want to disturb Roy too late, though."

"No, it wouldn't be wise."

But if Sylvia hoped to see her brother that night she was doomed to disappointment. There was a slight accident on the railroad, not involving the train of our friends, however, and it was quite late when they arrived at Saranac.

"Well, we won't see Roy to-night," Sylvia decided after dinner. "But I'll see if I can get Harry on the 'phone."

CHAPTER XXIV

WORRIMENT

TELEPHONING in the Adirondacks was not such an easy matter as it is in New York, as Sylvia soon discovered. It developed that when Harry had called her up he had been obliged to go some distance from Loneberg Camp, and Sylvia had neglected to get the number of the station whence he talked to her.

In consequence, though she made a number of inquiries, she was unable, from Saranac Inn, to get in communication with her brother that night, and was obliged to give over the attempt.

"Never mind," said Mrs. Brownley. "We will go to them the first thing in the morning. You girls need a rest, anyhow, and it may be better if you don't see Roy, or talk to him or Harry and perhaps cause them both a restless night."

"Yes, I suppose it is for the best," Sylvia agreed, rather wearily.

She was very tired, for she had danced often and late the night before. She had slept but little and the day's long journey had not been conducive to rest.

"There's a dance on here to-night," Hazel announced, as she came into Sylvia's room after it had

been definitely settled that Roy could not be communicated with that night.

"No dancing for me," declared Rose, with decision.

"Nor me," agreed Sylvia.

"You will all be better off in bed," asserted the chaperon, "and so I officially prescribe that."

Not that the girls thought seriously of indulging in gaiety on this night.

Their sleep was not altogether dreamless, though it was heavy enough. But Sylvia had an uneasy consciousness, half dreamy, of some impending trouble. She could not shake it off even when she awoke and found her room bright with sunlight. She soon discovered that she was suffering with what was rare for her—a headache.

"I'm afraid my Knight of the Canoe had rather a bad effect on me," she confessed. "I want to look and feel my best when I meet Roy. I think I shall have my breakfast in bed this morning. It's a luxury I don't often indulge myself in."

Mrs. Brownley was duly surprised when, coming to Sylvia's room a little later, she found her charge partaking of grapefruit, bacon and eggs, and a pot of coffee, comfortably propped up in bed. A deft chambermaid was waiting on Sylvia and serving the meal.

"Why, my dear, are you ill?" asked the chaperon.

"This doesn't look like it," Sylvia answered,

pointing to the emptied plate. "But my head ached and I decided to rest."

"Perhaps that was wise," agreed Aunt Theodora. "I must see how my other charges are, though. Do you intend to go see Roy to-day?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. But I wanted to be at my very best. We have time enough. It isn't such a great way to Loneberg Camp."

Mrs. Brownley sought Rose, and, again, somewhat to the surprise of the chaperon, she found that young lady also breakfasting in bed.

"Well, well!" was her startled greeting. "Are you ill, too?"

"Why, is some one else doing this, also?" Rose asked.

"Sylvia is."

"And is she——"

"Not ill, no, I'm glad to say. But I suppose you have the same idea in mind—looking your best?"

Rose blushed.

"We really ought all to have stayed in bed this morning," Mrs. Brownley went on, "and as you dancing girls were cheated out of your beauty sleep there is no reason why you shouldn't make it up now. Rest as long as you like, my dear. We won't start for Roy's camp until after lunch, perhaps."

"But he may be anxiously expecting—Sylvia."

"Or—you. But it can't be helped. If anything were to arise, any sudden need, his friend would doubtless telephone."

Hazel and Alice were rather more vigorous than either Rose or Sylvia, and went down to the last breakfast. Then they came up to see the "invalids," as they called them.

"Indeed I'm no more of an invalid than you!" exclaimed Sylvia, with spirit. "I'm just getting up some reserve strength."

And, though she did not know it, there was coming a time when she would need all her stored-up energy.

Inquiry at the hotel office brought out the fact that Loneberg Camp lay about four miles distant from Saranac Inn, near Lake Clear, and that this point could be reached by driving. This mode of conveyance the girls and their chaperon decided on.

As they learned that the drive would not take long, they decided to defer it until after lunch, provided no messages were received in the meanwhile from Roy or his companion, urging their visit before afternoon.

"It will do us good to see a little of the lake," Sylvia said.

Upper Saranac Lake is about eight miles in length, and lies in a most picturesque section, dotted with other lakes and ponds, on which boating of many sorts, from canoeing and motoring to travel in small steamers, may be enjoyed. There was good fishing in the lake, the girls were told.

"But we can come back and enjoy that after we have seen Roy," decided Rose, and the others agreed with her.

They spent the morning in going about the hotel

and the grounds, venturing out a little way on the lake. It was a region of beauty, and Sylvia's plan of having the Nowadays Club take the first outing in the Adirondacks was voted an unqualified success.

"Better wait," advised the recipient of the impromptu motion of thanks. "The vacation isn't nearly over yet. You may all be sorry you came."

Luncheon time came, and as no word was received from Roy or his companion, Sylvia took heart, and began to hope that her brother's indisposition was but a passing one.

"But it's just as well we came up," she said to her chums. "We intended to, anyhow, and a day or two sooner doesn't make any difference to us. I did intend to make the trip by boat; for the canoeing is said to be ideal from Raquette Lake on."

"And we could have very much enjoyed a few more days at the Antlers," Hazel said. "But it is just perfect here. And they are going to have some dances, too. We'll talk about them, though, when we know your brother is better, Sylvia," she hastened to add.

"Oh, you mustn't let my family affairs put a damper on you girls!" was the quick comment. "I can't have that!"

"Perhaps Roy himself will be well enough to come over to some of the affairs," Rose suggested. "He is a lovely dancer."

"Well, you ought to know," said Hazel, significantly.

"Now, Baby, don't get sarcastic!" murmured Alice, soothingly.

But Rose did not seem to mind.

The drive to Lake Clear was entrancing. It was along a road that led through the forest, where the trees met overhead in an arch of green. The forest was as inviting as the lake had been, and the girls planned, later, to spend a day or so walking along the woodland trails.

"Roy is so fond of the woods," Sylvia remarked. "When he knew he was to come up here he brightened up at once, though he was in the depths of despair over losing that chemical secret."

"Do you think he'll ever discover it again?" asked Hazel.

"I hope so. The doctor said he might if he could have perfect rest."

"Well, I can't imagine a more perfect place to rest than up here," added Rose.

"It's a bit lonesome," said Alice, with a glance at the dense woods on either side of the waggon trail.

"It wouldn't be with the right party," Hazel asserted.

"Meaning?" questioned Sylvia, with a glance at her chum.

"Any one you like, my dear."

"Any one or any ones," declared Rose. "I notice Hazel believes there is at least more companionship in numbers."

"I'm not a bit worse than you, my dear."

"Don't let's spoil the day by even that sort of a discussion," Sylvia begged.

Mrs. Brownley was in front with the driver, and the girls occupied the other two seats of the big carriage.

It was the height of the Adirondack season, and they saw many evidences of campers and other summer folk enjoying themselves. It was a delightful drive, and when Lake Clear was reached they started off on a little side road toward Loneberg Camp.

Though it was called a camp, it was really a hotel of the smaller kind, with enough comforts and conveniences to make it an ideal place to spend a vacation, if one liked solitude, for it was well off in the woods.

There were not many guests, but some young chaps on the porch looked hopeful as the four pretty girls drove up. There was a noticeable air of life about them, as they "spruced-up."

"Mr. Montray and Mr. Pursell," repeated the clerk, when Mrs. Brownley had made inquiries at the desk. "Yes, they were here, but they left this morning."

"They left this morning!" echoed Sylvia, blankly surprised.

"Yes, miss. It seems Mr. Pursell was expecting friends, and when they did not come he and his companion left about ten o'clock."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Sylvia. "And to think that we might have been here if I hadn't—well, there's no

use in lamenting, I suppose. They'll be back shortly, I expect. We'll wait for them."

"No, miss, I don't think they'll be back to-day," the clerk said.

"Not back to-day! Where did they go?"

"I heard Mr. Pursell say they were going to visit friends who have a bungalow on Lower Saranac. Your brother, is he, miss?"

"Yes."

"Well, your brother and his friend took some baggage with them, and I should say they were going to stay a week."

"A week!" cried Sylvia. "They said nothing to me about it. Was it—was it rather sudden?" she faltered.

"Yes, I should say it was," the clerk admitted.

"And my brother, was he better?"

"Well, miss, no, to tell you the truth. And I think his friend did not want him to leave this place. But Mr. Pursell insisted, and they went away. However, I have a letter for you. Mr. Montray left it to be given to you if you came. Probably that will explain."

He handed Sylvia a sealed envelope. She took it with a heart that beat faster than usual, and with a vague sense of worriment as if a calamity might happen at any moment. Why had Roy left so suddenly?

Sylvia did not like it.

CHAPTER XXV

MAKING PLANS

WHILE her girl friends looked on wonderingly, and while Mrs. Brownley conversed in low tones with the hotel clerk, Sylvia tore open the envelope that had been handed her. It bore her name, but she noted in a flash that it was written in a scrawl, and not in the usually neat, though character-indicating, chirography of Harry Montray. For Sylvia had had several letters from him regarding her brother since the trouble had come to him, and she had always admired the firm handwriting of the young man who had proved such a friend to Roy.

"He must have written this in a hurry," was Sylvia's thought as she took from the torn envelope the single sheet of paper.

And as she glanced at the signature, making sure, first of all, that it was Harry's, the vague sense of foreboding increased.

Why had Roy left the camp-hotel so suddenly? Why had he not been content to stay at Loneberg until he had recovered? Whence his sudden determination to go some distance off and visit friends in a bungalow? And who were the friends?"

These were questions Sylvia hastily asked herself before she read the letter so strangely left for her.

But perhaps a perusal of it would settle them. She read:

“DEAR MISS PURSELL.

“Please excuse the appearance of this note, as I have but a moment to write it in, and must do it when Roy does not see me. I am leaving it with the clerk, in the hope that you will soon come and claim it.

“I regret to inform you that Roy, after showing every indication of recovery (except for a few relapses of which I informed you), has taken a sudden turn for the worse to-day—the day when he and I expected you. He now insists on going to visit some friends who have a bungalow on the eastern shore of Lower Saranac Lake. Nothing I can say or do will get that notion out of his head. I do not know what to do about it, save humour him.

“The name of these friends is Russman. Mr. Russman is a German whom, it seems, Roy met while at college, and also later, after he came to our firm. Mr. Russman is a chemist, and Roy has a notion he can help him in recalling the details of the lost formula. I do not know whether that is fancy or fact. At any rate, Roy insists on going to see Mr. Russman, and, of course, I must go with him.

“We are starting at once, and will drive as best we can across country. The roads are not good, and it would be much better to go by water, up through Middle Saranac, but Roy will not listen to that.

"I am writing this as he is packing. I will do the best I can for him, but I think it will be wise, when you get this, to come to Mr. Russman's bungalow as soon as you can."

There followed directions for reaching it.

"Roy only heard the other day," the letter went on, "of the presence of Mr. Russman in this vicinity, and he at once became more nervous than before. The forgetting of the chemical formula seemed more than ever to prey on his mind. That is why I sent you word that he was not as well as he had been. But perhaps this trip may do him good, especially if it is followed by a visit from you and your friends. If I may, without giving offence, I will say that I think if Miss Rose Bancroft were to come Roy would greatly appreciate it."

"I must show Rose that," Sylvia mentally resolved.

"So we are leaving at once," the missive concluded, "and I hope you will follow as soon as you can. But if it is late when you get this, you had better postpone your trip until to-morrow. Come by water, if possible, and come straight to the bungalow. I will be there with Roy.

"With the best of wishes, I remain,

"Yours faithfully,

"HARRY MONTRAY."

Sylvia drew a long breath as she finished the letter.

"Oh, I hope it isn't bad news!" exclaimed Hazel.

"Is there anything we can do?" asked Alice.

"Where is Roy?" inquired Rose, unable longer to keep back the question that was fairly burning on her lips.

"At the Russman bungalow, on Lower Saranac," slowly answered Sylvia. "Oh, dear! I don't know what to do!"

"Tell me all about it, and let me advise you," said Mrs. Brownley. The letter was read to the chaperon and the girls, and Rose was given her own special message. She received it, as may well be imagined, blushing.

"I will go to him!" she exclaimed. "Can we start now, Sylvia?"

"I'm afraid not," was the answer. "Harry—Mr. Montray—advises against starting too late. And we certainly would hardly be able to take the road through the wood at this hour."

"But what can we do?" asked Alice.

"I think we had better arrange to stay here for the night, or, better perhaps," said Mrs. Brownley, "go back to Saranac Inn. We can start from there in the morning, hire a motor boat if we can get one, and go through Middle Saranac Lake to Lower, and then on to the bungalow."

There was a moment of silence while Sylvia and the girls considered this plan. Then Sylvia said:

"I think that will be the best. It seems hard not

to go to Roy at once, but we must consider the best for all of us. It would not do to get lost in the woods. So we will delay our start until morning."

"And shall we stay here to-night?" asked Rose.

"I think we had better go back to Saranac," suggested Mrs. Brownley. "Probably there are not accommodations enough here for all of us, and besides, if we go to Lower Saranac we may have to stay some time, and will want our luggage."

"I'm sorry, but I couldn't put you all up," said the clerk of the camp-hotel. "There are, of course, the rooms Mr. Pursell and Mr. Montray had, but——"

"Thank you, we will go back to the Inn, and start from there in the morning," Sylvia decided. "We have no baggage with us."

Thus it was decided, and the man with the horses was directed to get ready for the return trip. Sylvia and the others of her party had tea at the camp, and the clerk told them more details of the going away of Roy and his friend. Roy had seemed strangely excited, the clerk said, at the prospect of going to the Russman bungalow.

Sylvia could not shake off a morbid fear that something would happen—nay, that it had already happened. But she tried to be brave, and not to inflict her grief on the others.

However, Rose shared it, though she, too, put on a brave front. But Hazel and Alice must have suspected, for they were sweetly sympathetic.

Harry Montray had had time only hastily to scribble the note, and leave it with him for Sylvia, the clerk said, and then he had gone off with Roy in a rig they hired to drive through the woods from Lake Clear to Lower Saranac.

"But I would not advise you ladies to take that route," the young man said.

"We will not," decided Sylvia. "We'll go by boat."

They reached Saranac Inn well in time for dinner, and then began their arrangements for making an early morning start for the lower lake and the bungalow.

"Do you think your brother would be a guest there?" asked Alice.

"Most likely," Sylvia answered. "You see he and Mr. Russman—Professor Russman it really is—are great friends. I have often heard Roy speak of him, and he has often visited him at his home in Brooklyn."

"Well, then it won't be so bad if he goes there and stays," Hazel remarked. "It may even do him good. Who knows but that he may hit upon that formula again?"

"Oh, perhaps it will be all right—if Roy gets there," his sister said, and there was something in her voice and manner that prompted Rose to ask:

"Why, Sylvia, don't you think he *will* get there?"

"Oh, my dear—I don't know—please don't ask me. I have such a queer feeling!"

"You're all tired out—that's what's the matter!"

declared Hazel. "You need a good rest. We have been doing too much dancing."

"No, it isn't that," Sylvia said.

"Well, whatever it is, you need a rest," added Alice. "You lie down now, and we'll pack your things for you. Not going to take a trunk; are you?"

"No, only our suit-cases, though we can't tell how long we shall stay."

"Can we stay at the bungalow?" asked Hazel.

"Oh, I don't know about that. But if we get up there we can hardly get back the same day, and we'll have to stay somewhere. There are hotels and camps up there, I think. We'll have to arrange to stay."

"Of course," said Rose. "We don't want to go away as soon as we have arrived."

"Then, too, I must see about getting a boat," went on Sylvia.

"I asked about that," Mrs. Brownley said. "The hotel clerk informs me there are several we can hire to take us to Lower Saranac. I have the names of the men who run them. I'll go now to see about them. You *must* get some rest, Sylvia."

"Oh, I'm not tired. I must see to the boat myself. This is my affair, in a way."

"It's the affair of *all* of us!" declared Alice. "You can't do everything. I'll go with Aunt Theodora and see about the boat. You can finish packing and be ready to lie down then. Just leave it to us!"

And poor tired and worried Sylvia was glad enough to do so.

Mrs. Brownley was eminently practical in arranging for the motor boat. She had the choice of several, but, on the advice of Alice, selected a rather small one.

"The big ones look nicer," Alice said, "but you must remember we have to go through the Saranac River from the middle lake to the upper, and we don't want a boat that draws too much water. Canoes can make the trip all right, but a motor boat of deep draught might not be able to if the water, for any reason, were low. We don't want to be stranded."

"No, indeed," agreed the chaperon. So the smaller boat, though one sufficiently large, was engaged.

"But I'm only at liberty for to-morrow," the pilot informed them. "I'll have to come back with my boat to-morrow night, as another party has engaged her."

"We only want you to take us up to the Russman bungalow and leave us," said Mrs. Brownley.

So it was arranged, and the next morning our friends were to start on their trip through the two lakes to reach the bungalow.

CHAPTER XXVI

A LONELY PLACE

FROM Saranac Inn, down through Upper Saranac Lake, to a point where the turn could be made, to go through the middle body of water to the lower, is, perhaps, seven miles. The remainder of the trip, up past Eagle Island in Lower Saranac, and to the point where Professor Russman's bungalow was located, was about ten miles more, so the Nowadays Girls had a motor-boat trip of nearly seventeen miles to make.

Under ordinary circumstances, and in waters more open, the journey would have been only a matter of a few hours at most. But from the very start it seemed that Fate was against our friends.

Not that anything very serious occurred, but a series of small, but annoying, delays ensued from the very beginning.

In the first place, the girls were so tired, after their trip to Lake Clear, their preparations of the night and their previous exertions, that they all slept late. Even Mrs. Brownley did not arise at her usual time, and the consequence was they all assembled at the very latest breakfast, and looked at one another rather strangely.

"This isn't a very good augury," said Sylvia.
 "But I was so tired and sleepy."

"So was I," said Alice.

"I'm hardly awake yet," confessed Hazel.

"Nor I," admitted Rose. "But we must hurry."

They did—to the extent of making a hasty breakfast. Then it developed that their motor-boat man was not on hand ready for them. They had gotten their luggage together and gone down to the dock, only to see the *Balsam*, which was the name of the craft they had engaged, tied disconsolately to the float, with her engine partly dismantled.

"Why, what does this mean?" demanded Sylvia, rather indignantly.

A small boy was the only person in sight from whom it seemed possible to get any information. He seemed to be there for that purpose, for he asked:

"Are you the party that's going to Lower Saranac?"

"Yes," Mrs. Brownley said, "but where is Mr. Wherry?" and she looked around for the man from whom she had engaged the boat.

"He's sorry, lady," said the boy, and then he seemed overcome with confusion. "He—he's——"

"Sorry? Sorry for what?" demanded Sylvia, brusquely.

"He's sorry he can't go."

"Can't go!" It was a protesting chorus.

"No'm. He can't go till he gits his engine fixed. Suthin's the matter of it."

"Oh!" and Sylvia uttered a sigh of relief. "Then it isn't anything serious."

"Huh! You'd think so if you heard Hank Wherry talk about it. But then he makes a awful fuss over lots of things. He told me to stay here until you folks come and tell you he'd be back as soon as he could. He's gone off to get a bolt, or suthin' t' fix the engine."

"Oh, then he'll be back soon?" asked Hazel.

"I don't know how soon. Hank Wherry ain't much on hurryin'."

"Oh, why didn't I make inquiries about him and his boat before I engaged it!" exclaimed Mrs. Brownley. "Now there isn't another craft we can get, I suppose."

There was not, it developed, all the others available having gone to fill other engagements.

"Never mind," said Sylvia. "We have plenty of time. It isn't such a long trip, and even if we don't get there until late afternoon it will be all right. We shall have to remain all night, anyhow; perhaps longer."

The boy seemed to want to say something more, but hardly knew how to proceed.

"Well, what is it?" asked Rose, taking pity on his embarrassment.

"He—he said—Hank said, maybe if I stayed here and told you what I did tell you that you—that maybe—that you'd give me a nickel," the boy stammered.

"Of course!" Sylvia exclaimed, opening her purse. "Here is a quarter for you."

The boy's face shone with delight at this unexpected windfall of wealth.

"Do you know where Mr. Wherry went?" asked Mrs. Brownley.

"No'm, I don't. But maybe I could find him for you," he volunteered, as he partly opened a brown hand and gazed at the shining coin clasped tightly in it.

"I wish you would," Sylvia said. "Tell him we are in a hurry to make a start. We are late, but he is later."

"The late Mr. Hank Wherry," murmured Hazel.

The boy started off, and the girls found a shady place on the little pier to wait for their boatman. The *Balsam's* engine had been partly dismantled.

"He'll never be able to start to-day," said Alice.

"Oh, there isn't so much to do," Sylvia said, gazing with an experienced eye at the machinery. "He's taken out the carburetor. I'd rather have him repair it now than after we get started."

The other girls agreed with her.

They were just getting nervously impatient for the return of their boatman, when they descried him hurrying back.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting," he apologised. "But I was giving the motor a trial run, getting ready for you, when the carburetor began making trouble, and I knew I'd have to have it fixed. But

we can run all the better now, and we'll make up for lost time."

"I hope so," said Mrs. Brownley. "How long will you be now?"

"Not more than half an hour."

But again Fate stepped in and disappointed the girls. For Mr. Wherry was over an hour making the adjustments. So it was nearly noon when the start was made from the dock near the Inn.

"Well, she is making good time," observed Sylvia, as they finally chugged off in the *Balsam*.

"Oh, yes, miss. We'll be there in good season now. I'm sorry to have delayed you, but I'll get you there in plenty of time."

It was the best that could be done under the circumstances, and there seemed no help for it. Certainly the motor boat was at last running well. The Nowadays Girls knew enough about machinery to decide that.

"The carburetor has been giving me trouble right along," said the pilot, "and so I put on a new one."

They were passing through Upper Saranac, and the scene on every hand was one of beauty. The day was a perfect one of warm sunshine, and the waters of the lake sparkled invitingly. In the distance were the cool woods, the unbroken forest stretching away on every side.

Here and there were other craft containing gay parties of summer visitors. Now and then snatches of song floated across the water.

Sylvia and her chums were all in better spirits now that they were actually on their way to see Roy. But in spite of the sunshine, and the feeling of exhilaration that came from swiftly passing over the water, Sylvia could not shake off a sense of foreboding.

"It's foolish, I know," she said to herself. "But I feel just as though something were going to happen. Pshaw! I mustn't worry! I must be bright and cheerful for Roy's sake. He'll need cheering up, I think."

They ate their lunch on the boat, for they had brought a substantial one with them. Sylvia offered to steer while Mr. Wherry ate some of the sandwiches they offered him from their store.

"No, I'd better keep the wheel," he said. "I can steer with one hand and eat with the other. We'll be in uncertain waters soon."

This did not tend to reassure the girls, who had been made a little nervous by the delay of the morning.

"Are we likely to—to have trouble?" asked Alice.

"Oh, well, nothing so much, miss," was the answer. "We may run aground here and there, that's all. But I'll do my best."

"Well, don't run aground so hard that you can't run off again," begged Sylvia.

The afternoon was half gone when they started on the passage through Saranac River, connecting the middle lake with the lower body of water. The stream, while perfectly adapted for canoes, was, at this season, because of an unusually dry month, not



SYLVIA AND HER CHUMS WERE ALL IN BETTER SPIRITS NOW
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so good for motor boats. There were certain low places and sandbars.

"But I guess we'll get over it all right," said Mr. Wherry. "I'll run slow, and——"

The words were fairly jarred out of his mouth, for the boat ran into something and slowed up so suddenly that the engine was almost jarred from the bed-beams. With a quick motion Sylvia leaned over and pulled out the electrical switch, thus stopping the motor.

"Stuck!" exclaimed Mr. Wherry. "I didn't think we were near that bar. And we're not!" he added, with something of triumph in his tone. "There's the one I was looking out for up ahead there. This is a new one that we're fast on."

That was, however, little consolation for the girls.

"Can't we get off?" asked Hazel, anxiously.

The others waited rather apprehensively for an answer.

"Oh, I reckon I can pole us off," was the reply.

Mr. Wherry began to remove his shoes and stockings.

"Is he—is he going to swim?" asked Rose.

"No, I'm only going to wade," he answered for himself. "I reckon if I get out and push I can shove her off. Now if you'll all come in the stern you'll raise her nose out of the mud."

He climbed over the side into the water. The girls and Mrs. Brownley moved toward the stern, thereby elevating the bow, and after some rather

strenuous work Mr. Wherry succeeded in freeing the craft from the bar.

Then they went on again, but the running aground had delayed them, so that the afternoon was fast waning as they emerged into Lower Saranac Lake proper.

"But now we're all right," the boatman said. "It's good water from now on to the upper end. We'll have no more trouble."

Nor did they, at least just then. The *Balsam* chugged on her way serenely, and the girls had hopes of arriving at their destination while there was yet some daylight left.

But Fate had not yet finished with them. Mr. Wherry, it appeared, was not so well acquainted with the location of the Russman bungalow as he had thought. He went to the wrong landing and, after stopping to make inquiries, started off again.

It was now dusk.

"I wish we were there," said Rose, with a nervous, shivery glance over her shoulder. "It's lonesome up here."

It was indeed, for the dense forest came down to the very edge of the lake, and there were no camps or cottages to be seen.

"We'll be there in five minutes now," said Mr. Wherry. "It is lonesome, but then some folks like that up here in the Adirondacks."

The *Balsam* chugged on, while the darkness seemed to shut down like a pall over everything.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DESERTED BUNGALOW

"THERE'S your landing," said Mr. Wherry, suddenly, as he shut off the power and turned the bow of the *Balsam* toward the shore.

"Where?" asked Sylvia.

"Just ahead there, where you see that glimmer of light. I remember the place now. Queer I should forget it. But I was thinking of a party named *Roseman* that had a bungalow up here last year. I got him mixed up with *Russman*, and that's why I went to the wrong place. But I'm all right now."

The mistake he had made, however, had cost them some ten minutes of time. But at last they were at the place, and the girls gave sighs of relief, for it seemed that some of the nervous strain was over.

"Is the Russman bungalow near the lake?" asked Mrs. Brownley.

"Oh, yes, quite near. You take that path, right where you see the light. That lantern is at the dock. And you go up the hill, and the bungalow is in plain sight. You can't miss it."

"Are you going right back?" asked Sylvia of Mr. Wherry.

"Oh, yes, miss. I have a party to take to Big

Tupper Lake to-morrow, so I have to go back. If you'll excuse me, I'll just set your things on shore, and I won't get out myself. I'm late as it is, and I don't fancy going past those sandbars after dark. But I've got to do it."

"Oh, we shall manage very nicely if you set our valises and cases ashore," the chaperon said. "We are used to managing for ourselves."

She paid Mr. Wherry the price agreed upon as the boat was slowly drifting up to the little wharf. The girls could see the lantern now quite plainly. It was hung near a rustic sign that gave the name of the Russman bungalow.

A little later they stood on the shore of the lake in the darkness that was illuminated only by the faint gleam of the hanging lantern, and the *Balsam* was turning around and going back over the course it had come.

"It's certainly lonesome," shivered Alice, with a nervous glance around.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Sylvia. "With a bungalow so close at hand? You can even see the lights from it," and she pointed to a glow that shone through the trees.

"Yes, I think that must be the place," said Mrs. Brownley. "I suppose we had better go on up to it."

"Shall we shout to let them know we are here?" asked Hazel.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Sylvia. "They wouldn't

know who it was, and it might startle Roy. Just go up quietly."

"I do hope there is some place where we can stay to-night," said Rose. "Wouldn't it be dreadful if the bungalow should be so filled with guests that there was no place for us!"

"Oh, there will be other places," Sylvia replied. "I made inquiries before starting, and was told there were several hotels in this vicinity, at least boarding-houses and camps."

"But how to find them in the dark?" asked Hazel.

"We'll manage somehow. We aren't Nowadays Girls for nothing!" and Sylvia laughed.

"Well, forward—march!" commanded the chap-eron. Each one took her suit-case and started up the path that showed dimly in the gleam of the hanging lantern.

"There goes the motor boat," said Alice, turning to gaze at the moving, shimmering light that betokened that Mr. Wherry was making all speed down Lower Saranac Lake.

"Yes, we *have* to stay now, whether we want to or not," added Hazel.

"Well, we *want* to stay!" declared Rose, with positiveness.

"Of course," assented Sylvia.

The faint chug-chug of the *Balsam* came to them as they made their way up the ascending path toward the gleam of light in the woods which betokened the presence of the bungalow. Gradually the sound

of the motor became more faint, as the craft went around a bend. Then it died out altogether.

Suddenly there sounded a loud cry in the tree over the girls' heads.

"Oh!" screamed Hazel.

"A horrid loon!" gasped Alice.

"An owl!" scoffed Sylvia, with a laugh. "When *will* you girls learn to be nature-lovers?"

The weird cry of the hooting bird was repeated, but the girls were not so frightened now as they walked on. The glow of light increased as they neared the bungalow, which they could dimly see now, outlined amid the trees.

"I do hope they ask us to supper," sighed Alice.

"Of course they will," said Sylvia. "If they don't, we have a good part of our lunch left."

They were now directly in front of the bungalow, which proved to be one of good size, with a porch all the way around it. The building stood some distance back from the lake, on a little elevation of ground that gave a good view.

The front and back doors were wide open, which fact was easily ascertained, as broad shafts of light came from each door, cutting a path of yellow mellowness in the blackness of the woods. They had approached the Russman property at an angle.

"It's rather an awkward time to come visiting," Sylvia said, as she and her chums, with Mrs. Brownley, walked up the front steps. "It is a little too late for dinner and too early for breakfast."

"We couldn't help it," Alice said. "It was the fault of that motor-boat man. He delayed us."

They could now look into the living-room of the bungalow. A large hanging lamp gave ample light, and they saw that the apartment was most comfortably furnished. There were big easy-chairs, window seats draped with Indian blankets and rugs, and a log fire which had died down into glowing embers, for the night was rather chilly.

Through the living-room a glimpse could be had into the dining-room, over the table of which hung another large lamp, lighted, and casting on the board a mellow illumination. The table was set for several persons, but it appeared the meal had not been begun.

"We're just in time," whispered Hazel.

"Hush! Some one will hear you," cautioned Alice.

But Sylvia was impressed, almost from the first, by a strange and eerie silence about the place. There was not a sound. Not a voice spoke. There was no laughter. Even the clatter of dishes, always attendant upon mealtime, was absent, and there was no talk from the quarters of the servants, though the light streaming from the rear door would seem to indicate that the kitchen was in use.

"It is very strange," mused Sylvia. And again a sense of foreboding came to her. Something seemed to hang over her—to press upon her heart. She tried in vain to shake it off.

Mrs. Brownley knocked on the door. The sound echoed through the rooms, and they waited expectantly for the answer of approaching footsteps.

But only silence greeted them.

"Knock again," urged Rose.

The chaperon did so, but once more the echo was the only answer.

"That is strange," said Sylvia, voicing aloud the feeling that was overmastering her. "Very strange!"

"They don't hear us," murmured Aunt Theodora.

"Call!" suggested Hazel. "They may be out in the woods."

"What! after dark, and with supper all served?" asked Alice, incredulously.

A third time Mrs. Brownley rapped, and then, waiting a few seconds, she called:

"Is any one here?"

There was no reply.

"Roy!" suddenly called Sylvia. "Roy Pursell! It is I—Sylvia!"

Her voice carried well. In that silent place it seemed to fill and echo through the woods. But no one answered.

"Let us go in," said Mrs. Brownley. "Something may have happened."

"Oh—what?" gasped Rose.

"I don't know, my dear. But evidently they cannot hear us. I am sure they would welcome us if

they could, so let us go in and make our presence known."

Rather embarrassed, they made their way into the living-room. They took pains to make considerable noise, letting the screen door slam shut, but their intrusion was not challenged.

"It is very strange," Sylvia observed again.

They went into the dining-room. And there the strangeness was increased, for there was every evidence that the family and their guests had at least taken their places at the table, though no one had eaten anything. For napkins were unfolded, and in one or two cases had fallen to the floor. And two chairs were upset, as though the occupants had arisen hastily, and in so doing had overturned the pieces of furniture. The table was slightly disarranged, too, showing more plainly that it had been left suddenly, and by all the guests.

"But what does it all mean?" gasped Sylvia.

"I can't imagine," answered the chaperon.

They stood looking at one another, and then gazed about the deserted dining-room. The answer to the puzzle was not plain.

"Can this be the right place?" asked Alice. "We may have made a mistake."

"It is the Russman bungalow, surely enough," Sylvia said. "I have heard Roy describe it several times. And I saw, in the living-room, a suit-case with Mr. Russman's name on it. This is the right place."

"But where is Roy—Mr. Montray—Mr. Russman? Where is—every one?" Rose asked, and there was a sob in her voice.

"I don't know," said Sylvia, simply.

Mrs. Brownley had penetrated to the kitchen through the butler's pantry. The girls followed her.

There was no one there. But the fire was burning in the stove, and on it were several dishes of food, being kept warm. On the kitchen table were other dishes ready to serve, but the food in them was cold.

"Is any one here?" Sylvia cried, raising her voice in a nervous shout.

No one answered. It was as though a blight had fallen on the deserted bungalow—a blight like that of some ancient fable. The occupants of the house in the woods had been made to vanish just as they were about to sit down to the table.

"Is any one here?" Mrs. Brownley cried, standing at the foot of the stairs and directing her voice upward.

No one answered.

Once again they walked through the deserted lower rooms, more and more puzzled, and trying to pluck up courage to ascend the stairs. The silence was oppressive.

"The place is deserted," said Sylvia, in a low voice that, quiet as it was, sounded too loud in that silent place.

"Deserted!" whispered Rose. "Then where is Roy?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

MISSING

CLUTCHING at the hearts of the girls there seemed to be an unseen spirit of fear in that deserted bungalow. They all felt it. Even Mrs. Brownley, who was not unduly given to indulging her nerves, seemed to feel the depression.

"Deserted!" murmured Sylvia. "Do you really think this bungalow is deserted?"

"What else can we think?" asked Rose. "There isn't a soul here."

"But they have been here, and within a few minutes," Hazel argued. Going into the kitchen, she put her hand on the outside of some of the dishes on the stove. "They are not cold yet," she said. "They must have gone out just before we came here."

"I hope that wasn't the reason," Alice said, grimly enough, but even she did not smile at her joke.

"They must be somewhere about," Sylvia went on. "They can't have heard us."

"We made noise enough," declared Alice.

"Let's go upstairs," proposed Hazel.

"In another person's bungalow!" exclaimed Rose.

"What of it?" came from Alice. "We've already taken a good many liberties, and a few more won't matter. They may all be upstairs and—well, something may have happened. They may be unable to answer us."

"Something happened!" gasped Rose. "Don't say that or——"

"No, don't make us any more nervous than we are," urged Sylvia.

"What I meant," Alice explained, "was that they may have gone upstairs, because of some alarm down here, and be afraid to come down. There may be only some ladies and children here with the servants, and they may be hiding up there."

"You're only making it worse," Sylvia cautioned her, with a glance at timid, shrinking Rose. "Let's go upstairs and see."

"Oh, but if there should be——" Rose began.

"Look here!" exclaimed Alice, vigorously, "all I meant was that perhaps one of the children had a fit—a nervous crying spell—it is rather lonesome up here, you see, and—well," she finished, "the family, or what is left of them, may be upstairs. Let's have a look."

"I think it is the only thing to do," said Mrs. Brownley. "We must satisfy ourselves that there is no one here. Then we shall know what next to do."

"I wonder what that will be," murmured Hazel. The bungalow was well lighted with hanging and

other kerosene lamps. Electricity had not penetrated that far, as yet. There were lights upstairs, for the glow of them could be seen.

"Come on—all together!" cried Sylvia, taking the lead. At least she was giving an example of boldness under trying circumstances. They all felt the pall of the mystery that seemed to have fallen over the bungalow.

"Is any one up there?" Sylvia demanded, pausing halfway up.

There was no answer.

"I say!" exclaimed Alice, who brought up the rear. "Some of us ought to stay down here, I think."

"Why?" asked Mrs. Brownley.

"Because, if the owners come in unexpectedly, while we are upstairs, and they hear us moving around, knowing they left no one in the place, they may take us for burglars and——"

"That's so," agreed Hazel. "I'll stay with you, Alice."

"No, it is better that we all go up!" Mrs. Brownley decided. "Come on, girls."

"I don't believe we'll find a soul up there," Sylvia said, under her breath. But she went on boldly, nevertheless.

The bungalow was a large one, artistically arranged, and the upper floor contained a number of rooms and baths. There was a small third story, where the servants' rooms were located. As the

place was well lighted it did not take long to make a thorough search. The rooms showed that the members of the household had come down from their rooms after dressing for the dinner which was spread out in readiness for them in the dining-room below.

But of the occupants of the bungalow there was not a sign, save the mute ones of scattered garments and personal belongings.

"Where can they be?" wondered Alice.

"It is as though a plague had fallen upon this place, and they had all fled to escape," ventured Hazel.

"Oh, I wish you wouldn't say such things!" exclaimed Rose.

"Here's Roy's room!" suddenly cried Sylvia, pausing outside a certain bedroom.

"Is—is he in it?" gasped Rose, clinging to a faint hope.

"No," and the voice of Sylvia was sad. "His things are here—some of the—the brushes I gave him," she faltered, as she caught sight of her brother's toilet articles on his dresser.

"Isn't it puzzling?" Alice said.

"It's *terrifying!*" Hazel declared. "It's like something you've read of in a book."

Mrs. Brownley was going about systematically, looking in every room. It was the height of ill manners, she felt, to thus prowl about another person's house, but once she had started on that dis-

agreeable quest she would do it thoroughly. She even penetrated to the servants' quarters, but there was no sign of them.

The whole bungalow showed every appearance of having been hastily deserted by the whole number of its occupants. With faltering steps the girls and their chaperon descended the stairs. Sylvia paused to turn down a lamp that was smoking.

"Well, there's only one thing to do," declared Hazel, and she seemed to have arrived at some desperate decision.

"What is it?" asked Rose.

"We must hurry down to the lake and call back that man with the motor boat. He must take us back to—to some place where there *is* some one. Hurry! We must call to him before it is too late."

"It is too late now," said Alice. "He is far away by this time."

"I'm not going back!" declared Sylvia. "Roy is here—or he has been here within a few minutes, and I'm going to stay until I find him."

"Oh, but we can't stay here—with—with this mystery hanging over us!" gasped Hazel. "It's so weird and terrifying. I want that man back with his motor boat. At least *he* is human. Come on, Alice, we'll call to him."

Before the others could stop them the two girls ran down the lamp-lighted path to the edge of the lake. It was not far, and fear and desperation because of the strangeness that seemed to hang over

the deserted bungalow made them forget the fear they would ordinarily have had in plunging through the woods after nightfall.

"You can't make him hear!" Sylvia called after them.

But Hazel and Alice gave her no heed. They raised their shrill voices in a shout after Hank Wherry, who had turned about and departed in the *Balsam*.

It seemed a long time since this had occurred, but really it was only a few minutes, for the search of the bungalow, though it took a considerable period of time, as marked by nerves, was not very long in actual measurement.

"We *must* make him hear!" said Hazel, desperately. "Call again, Alice."

They called and shouted. They flung the name of the man and his boat to the night winds, and mingled that with the appeal for "Help!"

But only echoes answered them.

"Oh, do stop it!" begged Rose, advancing a little way down the lamp-lit path. "Stop calling!"

"Let them go on," advised Mrs. Brownley. "It's better than having them crying hysterically, and if they don't make that Wherry person hear they may attract the attention of those who so strangely deserted the bungalow. Let them call."

And so Hazel and Alice called, and called again, awakening the echoes of the forest, sending their young voices out over the silent waters of Saranac.

Now and then an owl hooted, as if in derision, and then would come the weird and nerve-racking screech of some loon, to remind the girls of the other night they had spent alone in the open. But there was no human answer.

Disconsolately Alice and Hazel rejoined the others. To do them credit neither showed any signs of breaking into hysterical tears. They were Nowadays Girls in every sense of the word. They were too sensible and too healthful to give way easily to their feelings, though certainly this was a very trying time.

"Well, what are we to do?" asked Rose.

"Go back to the bungalow," decided Mrs. Brownley. "I, for one, am hungry—ravenous. This forest air gives one such an appetite."

"I'm simply starving," Alice confessed. "But what shall we eat? The remains of our lunch?"

"There is a very good meal in readiness up there," the guardian said, waving her hand toward the lit-up bungalow. "All it needs is re-heating."

"Oh, but would you take *that*?" gasped Hazel.

"Why not? We intend to call, and be the guests of Professor Russman, when we can find him. As Roy Pursell is—or was—a guest, surely he will receive Roy's sister and her friends. Simply because the Russman family is not here to welcome us need not stop us from eating. In fact, I think they will be glad, when they do return, to find that we have made ourselves at home," finished the chaperon.

"If they *do* return," said Alice, and she could not keep from her voice a tone of gloom.

"Oh, of course they'll come back!" declared Sylvia. She spoke almost cheerfully. "I think Aunt Theodora is perfectly right. We'll go up there and eat our dinner. It will make us all feel better, and when it is finished, why, I'm sure the family will come back, and the mystery will be explained."

It did seem a bit odd to make thus free with another person's house and belongings, not to say food. But the girls cast aside their first scruples, and entered into the spirit of the affair.

They laid aside their hats and wraps, and the fire, which had not gone out, was coaxed into more brightness with some dry wood ready in the kitchen. Mrs. Brownley put on a kettle of water to make fresh tea, for that in the pot had stood too long. She also warmed some of the cooling food, for she had been an expert Southern cook in her day.

"Now draw your chairs up to the table, and we'll begin," was Sylvia's invitation when everything was in readiness. "We do not know to whom we are indebted for this, but we will show due appreciation when we meet the proper persons."

There was a moment of hesitation, and then they began. And there had been no exaggeration when appetites had been spoken of. Each one ate heartily, and gradually, in a measure at least, the feeling of gloom wore off.

But there was still a sense of oppression, though perhaps not so much that as a feeling that "something was going to happen."

"Well, we shan't starve, at any rate," Sylvia said, still keeping that cheerful note in her voice. "There is enough food here for some time to come."

She had been out in the kitchen, looking through the pantry.

"You—you don't mean to say we are going to stay here for another meal?" gasped Rose.

"Stay here! Why not?" asked Sylvia. "Where else can we stay? At least until the family, or some of them, return and tell us what has happened and where my brother is. We'll go to a hotel, of course, if there is one around here, but this place isn't as much settled as I supposed. Of course we'll stay here!"

"All night?" Hazel wanted to know.

"If we have to—yes. I'm going to have another cup of tea and some more of that delicious plum cake," Sylvia went on.

Her now calm spirits had an influence on all of them. They finished the meal, and even washed the dishes. The hour was growing late, and once more a little feeling of nervousness oppressed them.

It was when Alice went out on the porch to look down toward the lake, that she saw that which moved her to exclaim:

"Girls, here comes some one!"

"Where?" demanded Sylvia.

"See! That light!"

A gleam was observed bobbing about in the woods. It flickered here and there, now being obscured by some trees, and again shining clear.

"Who can it be?" murmured Rose.

"Hark!" Hazel cautioned them.

The murmur of voices came to them—women's voices mingling with those of men.

"Some one is coming at last!" exclaimed Sylvia, with a sigh of relief. She had kept up nearly as long as she could under the strain.

Along a woodland path came a party of men and women. Several lanterns could now be seen.

"It looks like a searching party," said Mrs. Brownley.

"I wonder if they have come to look for the lost family," Rose proposed.

Into the gleam of lamplight from the open doors of the bungalow came the men and women. A tall bearded man was in the lead, and at the sight of him Sylvia exclaimed:

"Professor Russman!"

"Ha! What is that? Who is there?" he asked, shading his eyes with his hand that he might the better see who spoke. "Who is it?" he asked, sharply.

"It is I—Sylvia Pursell. Oh, where is my brother Roy?" she asked, eagerly. "Is he here? Was he here? We came to find him but——"

"You—here?" the professor cried. "Roy's sister! This is a strange coincidence."

"Where is Roy?" his sister demanded.

"Now please don't get excited," begged Mr. Russman. Perhaps he had had enough of it that night. "It is unfortunate, but your brother is not here. He was with us, but now he is, I regret to say, missing!"

"Missing!" gasped Sylvia. "Has he—is he——"

She could not continue, but swayed unsteadily and put out her hands like one groping in the dark.

CHAPTER XXIX

A SLEEPLESS NIGHT

"STEADY, my dear!" came the calm voice of Mrs. Brownley. "Don't go off now. It will be all right."

She put her arms about Sylvia, and the pressure, with the calming words, had an effect. With a shudder the girl held herself back from the brink of a faint.

"But where is Roy?" she faltered, moistening her dry lips with a tongue scarcely more wet. "What has happened to him?"

"That we do not know, my dear young lady," said Professor Russman, who had now ascended the steps of his bungalow, followed by his wife and the servants. "Will you not come in?" he asked, courteously—"you and your friends," and he included them all with a friendly gesture.

"We have been in," said Mrs. Brownley, thinking it best that she should make the explanation now. "We took the liberty of getting our supper. We arrived here—the place was deserted—we could not understand. So we helped ourselves while waiting."

"And you were perfectly welcome—all of you," their host went on. "It is a strange story. If you

will come inside I will tell you. Ah, to think of finding you here when we come back from our unsuccessful search—you of all persons in the world!" exclaimed the professor, gazing at Sylvia.

"Your—your unsuccessful search," she repeated, wonderingly. "I do not understand."

"And no wonder," broke in Mrs. Russman. "We cannot understand it ourselves, Sylvia. It is like a dream—a nightmare."

"But is Roy—alive?" his sister faltered.

"Yes, or he was when he rushed out of here an hour or so ago," said the professor, gravely. "You may go on serving the meal," he added to the servants. "My wife will want something and so shall I. Adolph and Mr. Montray may return later."

"Oh, is Harry here too?" asked Sylvia.

"Yes, he was helping us in the search."

"What search?" Sylvia said. She was doing all the questioning, and the others deferred to her, as it was her right.

"Come inside and I will tell you everything," said the professor. "Will you not have a cup of tea?"

"We had plenty," Mrs. Brownley replied. "In fact, we made free to help ourselves."

"I am glad you did," was his friendly retort. "It is no time for ceremony."

Sylvia knew the scientist and his wife, though not as intimately as did Roy. But they welcomed her as an old friend, and her companions also. Soon they were all seated in the dining-room, and while the

maids served the belated meal, explanations were made on both sides.

"But why did Roy go away if he was here?" Sylvia asked, when Professor Russman had only begun his remarks.

"I do not know," he answered, gravely. "Perhaps you can explain that. I shall tell you all I know. He came here——"

"And you don't know where he is now?" Sylvia asked. She really could not refrain from the interruption.

"He is out there—somewhere," said Professor Russman, solemnly, and he waved his hand toward the forest that enclosed the bungalow on three sides. In front was Saranac Lake.

"Out—out there?" faltered Sylvia.

"But my son Adolph and Roy's friend, Harry Montray, are searching for him," went on the scientist, with as cheerful a smile as he could summon in the emergency. "Never fear! They will find him and bring him back to us. It is but a temporary whim. Perhaps born of his trouble. Listen, now, and I will tell you."

He led the way into the living-room, while the servants cleared the table. Mrs. Russman, who had been made acquainted, as had her husband, with Mrs. Brownley and the others, had made them welcome most hospitably.

"Roy came to see me with his friend, Harry Montray, arriving yesterday," the scientist went on. "I

was surprised to see him, as I did not know he was up here, thinking him with the chemical concern. I was greatly surprised when he told me that he had been ill, and had lost a most valuable chemical secret."

"Isn't it too bad!" exclaimed Sylvia. "We all feel so dreadfully about it; Roy losing his health and all that!"

"So his friend Harry quietly explained to me," the scientist resumed. "Roy wanted to consult with me about some formulas and I was only too glad to help him. He seemed perfectly rational and at times he surprised me by the grasp he had on the subject of coal-tar products. He has made a deep study of them."

"Perhaps too deep," murmured Sylvia. "That is what caused his breakdown."

"So I surmised, after I had talked with him a short time," said Mr. Russman. "Well, to make a long story short, we made him welcome here at the bungalow, and told him he and his companion could stay as long as they liked. I even arranged to go over with him some of the chemical combinations that might lead to his rediscovery of the lost formula. He was seemingly delighted with that."

Mr. Russman paused for breath. Then, almost for the first time, Sylvia and her friends noticed how exhausted and bedraggled were he and his wife, as well as the servants.

"Oh, what have you all been doing?" she asked.

"It is unfair of me to keep you talking here when you need rest."

"No, it is all right. It is only that we are tired from having tried to trace Roy through the woods. I have only a little more to tell. Then we shall rest and resume the search."

Rose showed her suffering in her face, but she tried to hide it and even smiled wanly as she glanced at Sylvia.

"I could see that your brother was not in the best of health," went on Professor Russman, "though he had himself pretty well in hand. But the discussion of intricate chemical problems must have been too much for his brain, weakened by his illness.

"However, matters did not seem to be very bad, and I really had hopes that I might lead his memory along the paths from which it had unwittingly strayed.

"We were about to sit down to the dinner table, after a most pleasant afternoon, when your brother, I regret to say, Sylvia, was suddenly seized with a sort of delirium. He was not at all like himself, and, before any of us could stop him, he quickly rose from the table and rushed from the place, out into the woods."

"Without saying a word?" asked Sylvia, her heart beating fast.

"He merely exclaimed: 'I know where to find it! I know where to find it!' Then he rushed out, with-

out his hat, arising so hastily that he overturned his chair.

"Out he rushed, and, for a few seconds, we did not know what to do. It was as though we had all been stricken. Then his friend, Harry, called to us to go after him—that Roy was out of his mind, did not know what he was doing, and might come to some harm.

"Then we, too, servants and all, stopping only to take some lanterns, rushed out after the unfortunate youth. We left everything as it stood, thinking we should soon return. And—well, here we are—we failed in our quest."

And that was the explanation of the deserted bungalow. It was natural enough when the cause was known.

"And you could not find Roy?" asked Sylvia.

"Not a trace of him," returned Mrs. Russman.

"But that is not to be wondered at, considering the darkness and the almost impenetrable forest," her husband added. "We were hampered in our search. We shall renew it under more favourable circumstances in the morning."

"If Roy does not return, by himself, in the meanwhile," said the professor's wife, hopefully.

"Oh, of course, yes," he agreed.

"You say your son, and Roy's friend, are still keeping up the search?" asked Mrs. Brownley.

"Yes," the professor answered. "They went to get some of the professional guides of this neighbour-

hood, and will institute a general search. They will probably be out all night. They arranged to get something to eat at the house of one of the guides. They both wanted to continue the search, but I felt I must come back to the bungalow. I could not tell what would happen here."

"It was well for us you did come back," Sylvia said. "We did not know what to think."

The girls told their story of having come to the Adirondacks, and of their trip, thus far, into the woods. Professor Russman then gave more details of Roy's strange running away.

"What do you think he meant when he said he knew where to find it?" asked Sylvia.

"I think he referred to the chemical formula. But he was in a delirium, of course," Mr. Russman said, "and was not responsible for what he said."

"Oh, I do hope he returns," his sister cried.

Then began a nerve-racking wait. Some of the girls went to bed, but Sylvia remained up all night, sleepless. Mrs. Brownley sat with her, in her room, and each one started at the slightest sound—listening hopefully.

CHAPTER XXX

A GENERAL ALARM

DAWN came, rosy-pale at first, but turning to red, and thrusting back into the depths of the forest the blackness of the night—the long night that had seemed like a pall of blackness over the hearts of Sylvia and her friends.

And with the dawn came hope, renewed hope, as it always does.

“First, a good breakfast!” said Professor Russian, as he greeted his guests. “A good meal, and we shall be ready to take up the fight of the day. How did you sleep, Sylvia?”

“Not at all,” she said, trying not to speak wearily, and it needed but a glance at her eyes to show how she had spent the night hours—in a useless vigil, hoping against hope.

“Then you will sleep all the better to-night,” was his cheerful comment. “We shall have Roy back with us then.”

“I hope so,” murmured Rose, but so low that only Sylvia heard her. She pressed her chum’s hand under the cover of the tablecloth, for they were then at breakfast.

The meal did put new heart into them, though

Sylvia could not help wondering what fare her brother had, and where he would eat. She looked out of the bungalow window into the dense forest—a wood marked here and there by trails along which the search must now be made for the missing young man.

“What is the first thing to do?” asked Mrs. Brownley, as they pushed back their chairs from the table. The chaperon was one of those efficient women who like things done decently and in order, even when there was such an emergency matter as the search for a lost person. She was a great believer in system, and the new doctrine of efficiency.

“I think we shall go down to the house of one of the guides, whom Adolph was to see last night,” answered the professor. “Old Sam may have some news. Yes, that is what we shall do first.”

“And after that?” asked Sylvia.

“It all depends. But don’t get discouraged, my dear, if we do not have word from your brother at once. He may be in the woods for several days and nights before we find him.”

Sylvia uttered a low cry of protest.

“Oh, no—no!” she exclaimed.

“But there will be comparatively little danger,” Mr. Russman said. “It is the height of summer. It would do no harm to spend several nights in the open. But there are many shelters and open camps in the woods, and your brother is enough of a woodsman to build a shelter for himself, is he not?”

"Under ordinary circumstances, yes," Sylvia answered. "But if he is delirious——"

"Which I am convinced he was, or he never would have rushed out the way he did," Mr. Russman said. "It is better to face the worst, and then every little we can remove makes us so much better off. Even a delirious man would be able to realise that he must have shelter. But, even without it, he would suffer little in the woods at this season."

"There are no wild beasts; are there?" asked Alice.

"No, young lady. At least, not around here. Deer are the largest animals, but the hunting season is closed, so there is no danger of an accident from guns.

"Oh, do not worry! I am sure we shall find Roy all right and that he will not suffer. If we cannot locate him ourselves I will cause a general alarm to be sounded. All the guides, canoe-men, campers and cottagers of the vicinity will be glad to join in the search. It is often done up here when a person is lost in the woods."

"Does that often happen?" asked Rose.

"Oh, yes, and in nearly every case they are found again. Of course it is easy to get lost, for the trails are confusing to one who does not know them," the professor said. "But we will hope for the best. We, ourselves, followed Roy as far as we could last night, but he eluded us. However, perhaps my son and Harry will have had better success.

"Now we will go to Old Sam's house. He is one of the best guides in this region, and Adolph knows him well. He will be able to advise us. Do not be discouraged."

He spoke hopefully—cheerfully—and put heart into Sylvia and the others.

It was an almost tragic turn to the Adirondack outing of the Nowadays Girls. They had been so happy but a comparatively short time before—at the dance—the masquerade. Would Sylvia, at least, and would Rose ever be so happy again? Or would the shadow of the lost one always hover over them? They feared this, yet they did not like to admit that fear even to themselves.

Even the loveliness of the woods and the lake, and the entrancing situation of the Russman bungalow, failed to arouse any sense of appreciation in Sylvia and her friends. They looked at it without seeing. They had been extended the warmest hospitality by Mr. and Mrs. Russman, and made to feel perfectly at home. And Sylvia and her friends were truly grateful. But they could not shake off the feeling of gloom.

"Shall you let your folks know Roy is missing?" asked Hazel.

"Not at once," Sylvia replied. "It would only cause them great pain and sorrow, and perhaps unnecessarily. We may find him to-day. If we do not, and if he remains unfound after to-night, then, of course, I must let papa know. He would want

to engage a posse of men and find him. But we will make the search ourselves first."

"Bravo!" cried Professor Russman when he heard this. "That is the right spirit! I am sure we shall have success."

Leaving the servants and Mrs. Russman in the bungalow, the girls accompanied the professor into the woods, along the forest trail that led to the cabin of Old Sam, a veteran guide.

Sylvia tried to induce Mrs. Brownley to remain also, but the chaperon insisted on going with her charges.

"Your mothers depend on me, and I am not going to desert now," she said, firmly.

"But it is such a trial for you," objected Sylvia. "It is too much to expect you to tramp through the woods."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed the sturdy lady. "I am not like some modern girls, who can only dance one fox trot an evening. I was brought up to take long walks. And you seem to forget that I have done some mountain climbing in the Alps. If I could stand that, surely I can stand our Adirondack woods in summer. Now don't talk any more about leaving me behind, for I simply shan't stay. Go along!"

Professor Russman looked admiringly at the chaperon. His own wife was an accomplished woods-woman, but it was necessary that some one in authority remain at the bungalow, and she volunteered for

that waiting service. Roy might wander back, or her son or Harry Montray might return, and they would not know what to expect if only the servants were there to explain matters.

Our friends had brought their most needed luggage with them. They had expected to go to some hotel or wood-camp near the Russman bungalow, but though there was one not far off, Mr. Russman would not hear of their leaving him and his wife. There was plenty of room in the bungalow, he insisted, which was perfectly true, and they would want to be there to hear the first news—good or bad.

But Rose and Sylvia, almost with tears in their eyes, refused to admit the possibility of anything but good tidings.

From their cases the girls and Mrs. Brownley took stout walking shoes, short skirts of a kind to defy brambles and briars, and with a lunch, a portable coffee outfit, and other necessities and some medicines, they fared forth.

Somehow or other the spirits of all rose as they started off on the search. It was the very fact of doing something, and not sitting in the darkness, waiting, that caused this. The energy of work drove out the bad spirits of inactivity.

Professor Russman showed Sylvia and the others where Roy had entered the woods as he rushed from the table the night before, when the delirium so unaccountably seized him. It was a well-travelled trail, and of course no special footprints could be

seen. Presently this trail branched off into several others, and there was no way of telling which path Roy had followed.

"But perhaps Old Sam can tell us," Mr. Russman said, hopefully.

Their hopes, however, were doomed to disappointment. Sam was at home. He told of the visit of Adolph and Harry and described the plan of procedure he had mapped out for them. He had told the two young men to come back if they were unsuccessful, and then new plans would be made.

"Well, we will start from your cabin, and make a general search until my son and Harry come back," said the scientist. "We may come upon Roy unexpectedly."

The search was taken up, but at noon had brought no results. Sam himself had gone off on a little-used trail. He said he would search along that, and also take word to some fellow-guides.

Our friends ate the lunch they had brought with them, and, after a rest, started forth again. But as the afternoon shadows lengthened, and their shouts and cries, as well as their close scrutiny, had resulted in nothing, discouragement again held them all in its fearsome grip.

"We had better go no farther," Professor Russman said at length, as he noted how near the sun was to setting. "We had better go back."

"And give up?" asked Rose.

"Only for the night. Unacquainted with the

woods as we are, we might become lost ourselves, and that would be bad. We must go back, and leave what night-searching can be done to the guides and canoemen."

With heavy hearts they retraced their steps to Old Sam's cabin. They found Adolph and Harry waiting for them. It was the first time Sylvia and her friends had seen Roy's companion since the two had come to the mountains. There was a meeting that was as happy as possible under the circumstances. Harry told more details of Roy's case.

"He was on the road to recovery when this happened," he said, sadly. "Perhaps if I had not allowed him to make this trip——"

"It wasn't your fault at all!" interrupted Sylvia, quickly. "We must think now of what to do next."

"Send out a general alarm, I should say," broke in Professor Russman.

"I think so," agreed his son, and Harry nodded his acquiescence.

"It's the only thing left," declared Old Sam. "I'll spread the word," and taking down a conch horn from his cabin wall he blew a deep mellow blast, that echoed and echoed again through the forest.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE SEARCH

LONG blasts and short blasts did Old Sam blow on the mellow conch horn as, with his lips pressed to the opening, he puffed out his cheeks. Now the sound would almost die away, to blare out again with a suddenness that startled the girls.

"What—what does it mean?" faltered Sylvia.

"It sounds like something I heard when once I was in Scotland," commented Mrs. Brownley. "An old chieftain thus summoned the members of his clan."

"It's the general alarm," explained Harry. "The guides have a way of signalling to one another that way. They can send all sorts of messages. This one is to summon all who hear the horn to join in a search."

"How good of them!" Sylvia said.

"Do they often gather together this way for a general alarm?" asked Alice.

"Occasionally," explained Adolph, who had spent nearly all of his summers in the Adirondacks. "Now and then a hunter will wander away from his camp, or become separated from his party and have to be found in this way."

"Are there any who are never found?" questioned Rose, in a low voice, and in an aside to Harry.

He paused a moment before answering. A look into her face showed how much in earnest she was. Harry decided upon his answer.

"They always find them," he said, speaking cheerfully. He did not add that sometimes the missing ones were found too late. What was the need of frightening Rose?

"How long will it be before you and your friends will be ready to start out on the search?" asked Mr. Russman of the old guide.

"We will start in the morning," he said. "The men will gather here to-night, and I'll tell them what's up. We'll start out as soon as it's light enough to see, and that will be about three o'clock in the morning these days."

"Can't we do anything?" asked Sylvia. "We want to help, oh, so much!"

Old Sam looked at her keenly. He must have understood her feelings. Then Rose broke in with:

"Oh, *please* let us do something! It is terrible just to sit and wait!"

Old Sam nodded his head sagely.

"Yes, I know," he said, in a low voice. "I had a brother once lost in these woods."

"Did they find him again?" asked Hazel, eagerly.

"Oh, yes, miss. But it was some time, and—— But there! we'll find *this* young man, all right!" and he changed his voice to a more cheerful tone.

"And may we help?" repeated Sylvia, eagerly.

"Yes," said Sam. "If I were you I'd not go too far from the bungalow, though. What I mean is that your brother may return unexpectedly. In fact he may not be far from here now, but he may be going around in a sort of circle. If he was as ill as you say he was, he probably wouldn't go very far.

"But my friends and I will take in all the trails within a circle of ten miles, and you girls had better not go more than three in any direction from the bungalow. Then you won't be lost. We don't want to have to search for two and even more lost persons," he added, with a smile.

"Say, Sam," demanded Adolph, with the freedom of an old acquaintance, "can't you furnish us with a guide? One that can pilot us around in the woods near the bungalow. I know the forest pretty well, but I confess I might get lost myself. Suppose you give us a guide and we'll organise a searching party of our own."

"That's a good idea," Sam said. "I'll do that. Two parties ought to be better than one, just as two heads are better than a single one. Now my advice to you is to go back to your bungalow, and get a good night's rest. We can't do much at night, anyhow, particularly at this stage. Later on, if we have to make a torchlight search we can do it. But there's no need now. Go home and rest. I'll be getting ready for the guides. They'll soon be

coming in, that is, all that aren't out with summer parties."

"Will they all hear that horn?" asked Sylvia, indicating the one Sam had blown.

"Well, not all, miss. But them as does hear it will blow another of their own, and so on. The word will be passed along."

"Hark!" exclaimed Rose.

From somewhere off in the forest there came the mellow notes of another conch horn. Clear and pleasant it sounded, and had it not been for the import of the blast, the girls would have enjoyed it, for the tones fell sweetly on the evening air. But now it seemed sadly melancholy.

"That'll be Jim Judson," said Sam. "He'll make them hear as I couldn't. We'll soon have quite a party here. I'll attend to the rest now, so you folks had better go back to the bungalow and get some sleep."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Sylvia, wearily. "It is all we can do until morning."

"And you will be able to do all the better work in the morning if you rest to-night, my dear," said Mrs. Brownley. "You look quite tired out."

Indeed Sylvia did look worn out, for she had not slept, and though the girls were sturdy, and accustomed to long tramps in the woods, they were all tired now. A rest would be a benefit to all of them.

"Well, let us go back," suggested Mr. Russman.

"Yes, the sooner we begin to rest the sooner we

shall be able to take up the search," Mrs. Brownley added.

Rose and Sylvia walked together on the back trail. It was as if they had a common bond of sympathy between them, as indeed they had. They did not say much, partly because they were too tired, and also for the reason that they were doing much thinking.

"Oh, isn't it just dreadful!" murmured Rose, as they walked along in the gathering twilight.

"I can't bear it—sometimes!" agreed Sylvia. "To think of his being out there," and she indicated the forest that surrounded them.

As they walked along they could hear, now and then, the calling of the conch shell, as one guide signalled from his lonely cabin, or camp, to another of his fellows. The sounds came sweetly over the ocean of green trees.

It cannot be said that any of the party ate with good appetites when the bungalow was reached. But even the food they did take was of benefit to them. Sylvia felt much stronger, and certainly more hopeful after the meal, and so did Rose.

But she and the others dreaded the long night, when many thoughts would crowd in upon them. A part of the evening was spent in talk with Harry, who told of Roy's condition since he had come to the Adirondacks with him. The lost chemical formula had, it appeared, bothered the patient more than a little. It was really keeping him from getting well.

"And then came this outbreak," Harry went on.

"It seemed to be the climax. I never saw Roy do anything more suddenly than when he leaped away from the table and rushed out into the woods. And he seemed to disappear as if the very earth had swallowed him up. But we'll find him—never fear!" he exclaimed, as he saw a look of pain pass over the face of Sylvia. "We'll get him back."

Sylvia and the others slept from very exhaustion, and in Sylvia's case, particularly, the hours of rest in the darkness performed a much-needed service. She was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, but was saved from it.

She was awake early—much earlier than any of the others—and feeling that she could not sleep any more, and that to lie in bed, tossing restlessly about, would only make her more nervous, she arose, took a bath, dressed and went downstairs. Only the servants were about.

Sylvia went out on the porch. Sitting on a stump somewhat down the path was a man—a typical guide. He was idly whittling a stick, the soft, curling shavings falling in a heap at his feet. Sylvia guessed who he was.

"Good morning," she said.

The guide did not start. It was as if he had seen her come out and had known she was going to speak, though his back was toward the house.

"Mornin'," he said, in a mellow voice. "Old Sam sent me up here to help with the searchin' party."

"I'm glad," said Sylvia, eagerly. "It is my brother who is lost. Oh, tell me! do you think we shall find him?"

"Of course, miss. Sartin sure!" he exclaimed, shutting his knife with a snap and standing up. He was tall and lanky, but he had a good face, and his blue eyes seemed to look right through one.

There was an early breakfast. The guide, who was known to Mr. Russman and his son, listened carefully to a statement of what had happened, and nodded his head.

"All right," he said. "We'll try all the trails around here. Now, if you're ready, we'll start. Old Sam and the others are on the search long ago."

And so they started off once more to find the missing one.

CHAPTER XXXII

LOST

PETE WHARTON, the guide who had been sent by Old Sam, looked critically over the little party he was leading into the woods, and along the trails that formed a network for several miles about the Russman bungalow. They did not intend to get more than three miles away from the bungalow in any direction.

"Well, I reckon we're pretty well equipped," said Pete, as if satisfied with his scrutiny. "We've got plenty of blank cartridges to fire for signals, and we've got whistles and horns. There's enough grub for the lunch, and we've got to come back by dark, anyhow."

"I've got some of those pocket electric flashlights," explained Harry.

"Well, maybe they're all right for you folks, but I'd rather have a good oil lantern or a bark torch," the guide said. "Howsomever, maybe we won't need either."

The man who ran Mr. Russman's motor boat was to go along to carry the lunch basket, which included a coffee pot and a little alcohol stove, for they did not want to wait to build a camp fire.

The girls wore their short walking skirts and stout shoes, for the trail was anything but smooth. Each one carried a stick Pete had cut for her.

Sylvia tried to get Mrs. Brownley to remain at home, but the chaperon stoutly refused to desert.

"I can walk as well as any of you girls!" she said, with a smile, "and I want to know, as soon as you do, when Roy is found."

"Oh, I do hope we find him soon!" cried Sylvia. "He might become hopelessly lost on these mountains. Men have done so before and have lost their lives from exposure."

"Not very often," Harry made haste to say. "And now, when the woods are full of camping and pleasure parties, when every lake and stream has canoeists on it, and when such a large searching party—two of them, in fact—is out, Roy surely will be found."

"I wish I had your faith," said Rose, in a low voice.

"You *must* have it!" Harry said to her, in a whisper, so that Sylvia would not hear. "We must all help her to keep up," he urged, and Rose knew well to whom he referred. "If she collapses on our hands we shall have to send for Mr. or Mrs. Purcell, and you know what that would mean."

"Oh, I shouldn't be discouraged, I know," murmured Rose. "And I'll try not to be. But it is very hard."

"I understand," said Harry, sympathetically.

"But you needn't be afraid Sylvia will collapse," Rose went on. "She isn't that kind."

"I didn't think she was, and I don't want you to show the white feather, either." He spoke a trifle sharply, but he had a purpose in it.

A little red spot burned in either of the formerly pale cheeks of Rose.

"The white feather!" she exclaimed. "How dare you suggest such a thing! I—I——"

"There, there," broke in Harry, soothingly. "No need to fly off the handle! I just don't want to put too much on Sylvia. After all, Roy is *her* brother."

"Yes, but he is my——"

Rose stopped short, blushed vividly and turned aside her head. Harry smiled to himself.

"I thought that would fetch her," he thought. "We shan't have any more trouble from her. She'll keep her nerves together for the sake of Sylvia, and Sylvia will do the same for Rose. That," he added to himself more or less judicially, "is what might be called playing both ends against the middle." Harry was pleased with his tactics.

Under the direction of Pete Wharton they adopted a systematic plan of search. Pete knew every trail in the woods, and had them in his head as a sort of map. Pete began at a certain place in reference to the "deserted bungalow," as the girls often called the place to themselves, and he said they would follow each trail in turn until they had reached the three-

mile limit. In some cases, he added, they might take in a four-mile section.

They would start back toward the bungalow by another route on reaching their set limit on the trail, and so cover the ground zigzag fashion.

Now and then, as the party advanced through the dense forest, pierced only by narrow trails, they stopped and shouted Roy's name. Occasionally shots were fired, and horns or whistles sounded. The other party of guides, under the direction of Old Sam, was far enough away to keep the sounds from conflicting, for Sam's party, also, was doubtless calling and signalling in various ways.

Sylvia had hopes that it would take only a little searching on the part of her friends to discover Roy. She had a feeling that he would become weary of wandering in the woods all alone, that the delirium would leave him, and that he would be found trying to make his way back to the bungalow.

"And if he does go back—I mean if he wanders back of his own accord, we'll not say anything to him; shall we?" propounded Rose, as she and the others paused for a moment on the brink of a little hill, while Mrs. Brownley, in the rear, sat on a log to rest.

"Say anything to him—what do you mean?" demanded Sylvia, who was in advance, and she turned around quickly. "Why shouldn't we say anything to him? Just because he——"

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way at all, my dear!"

exclaimed Rose quickly, as the red mounted to her cheeks again. "You didn't understand me. I meant that if we didn't find Roy——"

"Oh, we are sure to find him!" interrupted Hazel. "Don't suggest such dire possibilities, my dear."

"I didn't exactly mean that, either," hastily protested Rose.

"Give her a chance," suggested Sylvia. "I guess we're all so tired and worried that we are getting on one another's nerves. What do you want to say, Rose?" and she smiled at her chum; smiled, it is true, but in so wan and mirthless a fashion that the hearts of all ached for her.

"What I was trying to say," resumed Rose, "was that if Roy did, by some good fortune, make his way back to the bungalow alone, as he is very apt to do, and if we came back from our search and found him there, wouldn't it be better not to say anything to him about his having gone away?"

"Why, it isn't a secret; is it?" asked Alice.

"Oh dear!" half laughed Rose. "I do seem to be very stupid to-day, somehow or other."

"Perhaps it is we who are stupid," suggested Sylvia. "I think I know what you mean, though. You——"

"No, let me say it for myself," insisted Rose. "Otherwise I shall surely think I am failing in my descriptive powers, and I'll never fit in at college. I mean that it might embarrass Roy to have us mention that he—well, to be frank, that he went off in a

fit of delirium. It would be better to ignore it altogether, I think, and act as if nothing had happened. Just try and talk naturally to him, about the weather, or camping, or——”

“Rose, you’re the sweetest girl!” interrupted Sylvia, putting her arms about her chum. “I never would have thought of that. I’d have gone and blurted out something about how terrible it was for him to run off the way he did, or I’d ask him where he had been hiding, or else worry about his health, and ask a lot of foolish questions. I’m so glad you thought of that!”

“Oh, perhaps it would have come to you, also,” said Rose, not wanting to take too much credit to herself. “But, really, don’t you think that would be the wisest plan?”

“Most certainly!” agreed Alice. “It’s always best, when a person is out of his mind—Oh, I didn’t mean——!” and she stopped herself by putting her hand over her lips, giving Sylvia a conscience-stricken glance.

“I don’t in the least mind, Alice dear,” interrupted the sister of the missing youth. “Roy certainly is out of his mind, only temporarily, I hope—we all hope,” she added, as she saw Rose about to interpose an objection. “There is no use mincing words,” Sylvia went on. “Roy is what might be called mildly insane——”

“Oh!” interjected Rose, with a sort of gesture of denial.

"We might as well meet the issue bravely," insisted Sylvia, "we can handle it better so."

"As long as we know it isn't a family defect, and that it only came to Roy as a sort of horrid disease," added Alice.

Sylvia nodded, gravely, and resumed.

"So I think it will be well to adopt the plan Rose has suggested and simply act, when we see Roy again, as if nothing had happened. That, I have read, is the best way to treat people who have had anything the matter with their minds. It keeps them from brooding on their troubles, and helps them to recover more quickly.

"That is what they do in asylums, I believe," she added, after a pause.

"Oh, don't say that—don't use that word," begged Rose.

"Well, sanitarium, if you like that better," said Sylvia. "But, really, I am not at all sensitive on the subject now. I will admit that, at first, it was a terrible shock—as was this one, of finding that Roy had run away. But I am getting bravely over it. Why should one shun, or try to ignore, or cover up, a disease of the mind, when we are so ready to talk about diseases of the body? I have often heard women boast of having been successfully operated on for appendicitis, but if there was the least mention of some mental ailment, even though it be a temporary one, they shrank from it as if it were some disgrace."

"Of course it isn't a disgrace!" exclaimed Rose, warmly, coming to the defence of the absent Roy. "You look at it in just the right way, Sylvia; a disease of the mind is no different from one of the body, though it may be more distressing. But, as you say, this is only temporary, I'm sure. Roy will soon be with us again, and like himself."

"And I pray that it may be soon," murmured Sylvia.

There was a suspicion of tears in her eyes; nor were those of her chums altogether dry.

Alice, indeed, saved them all from breaking down completely, by exclaiming:

"Then it's agreed! If we get back, and find Roy waiting for us at the bungalow, we'll just be as jolly as we can, and pretend it was all a sort of lark, or game."

"That's it," said Sylvia. "Of course this is dependent on finding that Roy's mind is still troubling him when next we see him. He may be altogether over it."

"For which we shall all hope and pray," said Rose in a low voice.

"Yes," agreed Hazel. "After all, this may be the best thing in the world for him. I mean," she added quickly, as she caught Sylvia's startled glance, "it may be the crisis, or the turning point, just as a fever is highest before it breaks and the patient gets better."

"Well, there's nothing like looking on the bright

side of things," remarked Sylvia, and she tried to infuse cheerfulness and gaiety into her voice, but it was a hard task.

"They are calling us," said Rose, after a moment's pause, the silence that fell being punctuated by a hail from one of the searching party.

"Yes, it's Pete, and he's signalling to us," agreed Alice, looking off through the trees.

"I wonder——" began Sylvia. "No, he hasn't found anything. I guess he's just tired of waiting for us," she added, for the guide, having motioned to the girls to follow, again set off along the trail. "He'd have given the sign if he had discovered any clue."

For the parties had adopted some simple visual signs, as well as audible ones, that they might signal to one another when some distance apart. And Pete had not given the "found" symbol.

Talking, speculating, wondering, the girls advanced once more, heading down a little wooded glade where the guide could be observed, peering here and there for any sign that would indicate the passage of the missing young man.

"Anything hopeful?" asked Sylvia, as they came within speaking distance.

"No, miss, I'm sorry to say it, but that's the truth. It don't look as if he'd passed this way. But there's a lonely sort of trail, a little farther on, and I want to take a look at that."

"Lonely! What do you mean?" asked Rose.

"Well, I mean it's one that's seldom travelled, miss, and the young man, being as you might say—er—sort of——"

"Out of his head, Pete. You needn't mind saying it," put in Sylvia, wishing to put the honest old fellow at his ease.

"Well, miss, since you're so nice about it—out of his head, then. Since he's that way, and partly not responsible for what he does, I thought maybe he might take the lonesome trail from choice, though most folks wouldn't."

"I see," agreed the sister.

"That's why I spoke about comin' in here," Pete went on. "It's just possible we'll see some signs if we go in a way."

He led the way into what soon proved to be a dense patch of wood, almost a swamp in fact, though through it ran a trail that was faintly defined.

"It doesn't look as if any one had been along here for ages," whispered Alice.

Somehow it seemed natural to whisper in that eerie place.

"I told you it was lonesome, miss," answered the guide. "But if you don't want to come——"

"Oh, we wouldn't desert for the world!" cried Sylvia, quickly. "Go on, Pete, we'll follow."

And on they went. The way led downward, and as they reached the lowest point, where the water lay in pools, there came a sudden noise in the bushes, to one side of the trail.

"Oh!" screamed Rose, nor was she alone in being alarmed, for the others echoed her cries.

"What is it?" asked Sylvia.

A small reddish-coloured animal, with seemingly an unnecessarily large tail, sprang out, was seen for a flash, and then disappeared in the underbrush.

"A dog!" cried Alice. "Maybe it is helping in the search—one of the guide's dogs?" and she looked questioningly at Pete.

"It was a fox," he said, drily. "There's been a den of 'em in here for years. They're harmless."

The girls breathed more easily, and kept on. But they soon exhausted the possibilities of the lonely trail, and found not a sign that Roy had traversed it.

"Well, no luck there," said Pete, as they emerged again. "But there's one satisfaction," he went on, looking at Sylvia, "you said your brother was used to the woods; didn't you?"

"Yes," she answered. "He would be quite at home in the forest."

Roy was a woodsman of no small skill, and he had a good sense of direction, which is invaluable to a hunter or forest-lover. Set Roy down in a big wood, and let him once get an idea of the points of the compass and it would be difficult to lose him. But that, of course, was when he was in normal health. Now, alas, he was not himself. And what had happened to him Sylvia and the others could only surmise.

But Sylvia's hope that her brother would soon be found was doomed to disappointment. As the hours

passed, and as trail after trail was carefully scanned, and no sign of the missing one was found, the spirits of all fell.

For signs of Roy were looked for, as well as his actual presence. That was the value of having Pete along. He could see things the others would pass by unwittingly. It might be a shred of clothing, caught on some bramble or bush, or a mark in the soft dirt of the trail, a footprint in a bed of moss.

I say it *might* be any of those things, but, unfortunately, it was none of them.

Harry had been able to describe the kind of shoes Roy wore. They were the same sort that Harry himself had on, heavy, with soles well studded with nails to prevent slipping. If any one with such a pair of shoes had stepped into soft dirt, a mark would have been left that easily would have been recognised.

But no such marks came to the notice of the guide, and when noon came he shook his head in puzzled fashion. But he took good care not to let Sylvia see him give this indication of discouragement.

"Oh, shall we ever find him?" Sylvia murmured, as she sank down wearily on a log to rest.

"Of course we'll find him!" exclaimed Harry, signalling to Pete to confirm this assertion.

"Sartin sure, Miss Pursell," said the tall, gaunt, blue-eyed man of the woods. "We haven't struck the most likely trails as yet. We'll hit them after dinner. Now set up, all of you, and have grub—

that is, askin' your pardon, lady, for applyin' sech a common name to victuals," he added, quickly, with a bow in the direction of Mrs. Brownley.

"That's all right," she assured him heartily, and with a manner that put him at his ease at once. "I've heard many an expression like that from my girls," and she smiled at Sylvia and her chums.

"We call it 'eats,' or 'feed,'" Alice volunteered.

"Oh, I know, my dears!" said their former teacher. "You can't be in a girls' school as long as I have and be easily shocked. But I think it will do us all good to have some of Pete's 'grub.' I know I am almost famished," and she smiled in the best of good-fellowship.

The coffee was soon boiling on the alcohol stove, Pete having found a spring of delicious water. Then the "table" was set on a fallen log, and the sandwiches passed around. All ate with better appetites than at any time since the discovery of the "deserted bungalow."

But, even as she ate, Sylvia would pause now and then to listen, or she would gaze off into the woods as if hoping to see her brother come walking along amid the trees, in his right mind at least, if not clothed. For it could not but have happened that he must be in rather a ragged and dishevelled state now as regards his garments, if he had tramped much through the dense forest.

But there came no sign, no sound, and again the party undertook the search, but in somewhat better

spirits. That is what food will do for one, even though it may have to be actually forced down. The human body, after all, is material, though the mind has a great control over it.

They went well up the mountain around Lower Saranac Lake, and even penetrated to the shore of the lake itself, keeping along that for some distance. But it was all without avail.

"Of course," said Pete, slowly, when he noticed the shadow on Sylvia's face deepening, "Old Sam and the others may have had some news of him before this. We won't know that until we get back to the bungalow, though."

"But to go back we would have to give up the search here," Roy's sister said. "And we can't do that. We'll keep on until dark, and then we'll go to the bungalow, and if we have no good news I hope some will be waiting for us."

"I hope so," came from Rose, as she stalked on beside Sylvia.

There were two trails close together at one point, though they separated widely farther on. Sylvia and her three chums, with Mrs. Brownley, were on this, while the guide, with Mr. Russman, his son, Harry and the boatman, were on the other. Just how it happened no one could ever explain, but the girls must have gone farther than they intended, for, of a sudden, they found themselves down in a little glade alone. It was Sylvia who first discovered it.

"Why, girls!" she cried. "Where are the others?"

"Just back there a way," declared Alice, reassuringly.

"We must return to them at once," said the chaperon. "It will never do to be separated."

They followed the trail back, but when they came to the place where the divergence began there was no sight of the others. For a moment the girls looked wonderingly at each other, and then Sylvia said:

"We must shout!"

They did, but they could not be sure they were answered. Certainly some sounds came back to them, but it may have been the echoes.

"Hark!" suddenly exclaimed Hazel, when in another moment there might have been a panic of fear for all of them. "Some one is coming."

There was a sound of approaching footsteps, and the breaking of underbrush.

"Oh, if it should be——" began Sylvia, hopefully.

But the light in her eyes died out a moment later, as an elderly man came into view. The girls had never seen him before, but he seemed to be one who lived in the woods.

"Afternoon, ladies," was his cordial greeting.

"Oh, are you looking for—him?" asked Sylvia.

"For whom, miss?" He seemed a bit puzzled.

"My brother. He is lost in these woods—has been

since last night. We are searching for him with a party, but we took the wrong trail. However, the others must be near here. But have you seen my brother?" Quickly she described Roy.

"By hemlock!" exclaimed the old man, clapping his hand on his leg. "Say, I wouldn't be surprised if that *was* him!"

"Who? Oh, where? Tell me!" begged Sylvia, in her eagerness catching hold of his arm.

"Why, about an hour back," said the old man, "I was passing along the Ampersand trail, and on top of Bald Mountain I see a feller outlined against the sky. He didn't have no hat on, and he seemed to be actin' sort of queer. I thought it was one of the campers around here. Some of them is kinder foolish," he added, apologetically.

"I know—go on!" exclaimed Sylvia.

"Well, I didn't do nothin'," said the old man. "I just watched this feller a bit, and come on. Now I meet you and——"

"Oh, I'm sure that was Roy!" Rose cried. "Which way is it to Bald Mountain?"

"Right back on this trail a mile or so," and he pointed to the one he had been travelling.

"Come on!" cried Sylvia, eagerly. "Come on!" She hardly paused to thank their informant, but rushed along the trail. Hardly knowing what they were doing, but overcome by the excitement and the hope of finding Roy, the others followed. They did not even think of Mr. Russman, Harry and the

others. They were intent on getting to Bald Mountain as fast as they could.

Excitement gave them strength. Their weariness seemed to vanish magically. Even Mrs. Brownley kept up with the girls, and she was not a young woman.

The trail was not a plain one, but by this time the girls had become used to following even a faint path through the woods. On and on they fairly rushed. If they thought of the others at all it was to come to the hasty, if incorrect, conclusion that they could easily go back and find them once they had located Roy.

"How far did he say it was to Bald Mountain?" asked Hazel, when the pace had slackened a little.

"A mile or so," replied Alice.

"Well, we've come more than a mile—more than two, I should say," Hazel went on. "I say, girls, we'd better pull up a bit, and think of what we're doing."

"Oh, don't stop!" begged Sylvia. "We *must* find him!"

"But we must find Bald Mountain first," said Hazel. "And I don't see any signs of it. We seem to be down in a sort of swamp."

They were, indeed, on low ground, and the trail now turned downward instead of upward.

"Can it be that we are—lost?" cried Rose. She hesitated over the word.

"Lost!" gasped Alice. "Oh, it can't be!"

“Keep on a little farther,” Sylvia urged. “We may come to the mountain any minute now.”

But the farther they went the more the trail sloped downward. Clearly they had come in the wrong direction.

“We are lost!” said Rose at last.

CHAPTER XXXIII

UNEXPECTED HELP

FOR a moment a feeling of panic seemed to overcome not only the girls, but Mrs. Brownley herself. The word "lost" appeared to have a most sinister meaning under the circumstances.

For the girls had left their friends, the guide was with Mr. Russman and the others, and they had taken a wrong trail.

Were they to be lost, even as Roy was lost, and with the prospect of being left out in the woods with night coming on?

It was a question that each one hesitated to ask herself, and yet it was one that needed to be answered.

"Oh, we can't be lost!" Sylvia said at length. "Here is the path. We haven't strayed from that."

"Yes, but what good is it to us if we don't know where it leads to?" Alice wanted to know.

"Oh, but it *must* lead somewhere," Sylvia insisted. "If it doesn't lead where we want to go, which, just at present, is Bald Mountain, then we must go back along it until we get on the right trail. That is simple enough."

"To say; yes," agreed Hazel. "But is it simple enough to do?"

"We'll try, anyhow," Sylvia went on. Somehow she seemed to have recovered her spirits, which had been dampened by the assertion of Rose that they were lost. "All we'll have to do," went on Roy's sister, "is to keep going up instead of descending. We want to get on the heights, where we can get a good view."

"That sounds reasonable," Mrs. Brownley said. "Suppose we try it?" and she looked questioningly at her charges.

"I think we ought to call out before we stir another step," Rose said.

"What for?" demanded Sylvia.

"To see if the others are near here. If they are it will be better to go to them or get them to come to us, and let Pete take us to Bald Mountain. I don't want to risk trying to find it ourselves."

"Well, perhaps that will be better," Sylvia admitted. "We'll call. Mr. Russman and the others can't be very far back. I suppose it was foolish of us to come on without them. But they seemed to be quite near, and I thought they would follow us."

"I didn't think of anything but of getting to Bald Mountain," asserted Rose.

"If we had asked that old man he might have guided us," Hazel ventured.

"It's too late to think of that now," sighed Alice. "We shall have to guide ourselves."

"And we can do it easily enough," asserted Sylvia,

with perhaps more conviction than she really felt. "Come on now, let's turn about and go back. And we must hurry, for it is getting late."

The girls noticed, not without little shivers of apprehension, that the shadows were lengthening perceptibly. How far from the bungalow they were they could not estimate. And how far they were from where they had last seen their friends and the guide was equally a matter of mere supposition.

"Indeed we must hasten," agreed the chaperon.

She did not speak of her weariness. They were all weary, for they had come the last mile or so at a fast pace, spurred on by the hope of finding Roy on top of the hill, locally called Bald Mountain.

"We are somewhat like the King of France," said Sylvia, with a laugh, as they started back. "We seem to have marched down the hill, and now we are marching up again."

"The King of France reversed the process," said Rose.

"Besides, he had ten thousand men," added Hazel.

"Just one, in the shape of a guide, would be very welcome now," asserted Alice.

"Oh, we must learn to depend more on ourselves!" Sylvia exclaimed. "If we are to have Nowadays Club outings every year we must learn not to get lost in the woods."

"I still refuse to admit that we are lost!" said Alice.

"So do I," Sylvia agreed.

They were in better spirits now, and stepped on with lighter hearts. The trail led slightly upward, and they marveled, now that they were cooler-headed, how they had ever allowed themselves to keep on a downward path, when they knew they were supposed to be going up a mountain trail. But the excitement of the moment accounted for their lack of observation.

It was not until they reached a place where the trail divided that they came to a halt, and once more they looked at one another, if not exactly with fear in their eyes, at least with shadows of doubt.

"I didn't notice this before," confessed Sylvia, pointing to the forked paths.

"Nor I," said Alice.

"I thought we had come over a straight path from the time we met that old man," was the contribution of Hazel.

"We were so excited we didn't know what we were doing," Rose declared. "Now, the question is, which path did we come over?"

They stood at a place in the woods where three trails met in the shape of a Y. They had come up the right-hand side of the letter. But on their previous trip had they been travelling on the main stem, or on the left-hand fork? That was what they could not tell.

Sylvia bent over close to the ground, as she had seen Pete do several times. But the earth of the trail was hard packed, and she was not expert enough

to read the "sign" left by their footprints. Indeed she could see none.

"Well," she said, arising, "I give up! I don't know which path it was."

"Let's shut our eyes and pick out one blindly," suggested Alice.

"Don't be rash," Mrs. Brownley warned them.

"But what can we do?" asked Hazel.

"Go along one path for a little way, and see if we can't pick out some natural landmark that we passed coming down," went on the chaperon. "If we can't do that, say within half a mile, we may be pretty sure we are on the wrong trail, and we can walk back and try the other."

That seemed reasonable to the girls, and they decided to try that plan. Again hope came to them to drive away their weariness! But as they looked up and saw the shadows growing longer and longer, and noticed the wood darkening under the pall of approaching night, it required all their boldness to put on a brave front. They all tried to be brave for Sylvia's sake, for, after all, was she not suffering more than any of them, save perhaps Rose?

"Forward!" cried Mrs. Brownley. "Time is too precious to waste standing still."

As they went along the path they had selected the conviction became an ever-increasing one that it was not the path they had come over at first. They saw a little waterfall they were sure they had not passed before.

"We're wrong!" exclaimed Sylvia. "We've got to go back and try over again."

There was nothing else to do. It was becoming dark so rapidly now that they looked up in alarm, and found the sky becoming rapidly overcast with clouds.

"We're in for a thunderstorm," declared Rose, in alarm.

"Well, we're not afraid of lightning," asserted Sylvia.

"No, but it will make it so much more difficult to travel and find the path," Alice objected.

"It means we must hurry more than ever," Sylvia said.

"Suppose we shout here," suggested Sylvia. Their previous calls had been unanswered.

They raised their shrill voices in shouts again and again, but the only result was to set the echoes reverberating, and to strain their throats.

"Oh, come on, we'll find the trail ourselves," Sylvia finally said.

They hastened along, but had not reached the fork in the path when the storm burst.

There was a series of vivid lightning flashes, the thunder seemed doubly loud out in that wilderness, and then came the drenching rain.

"Come under this tree!" urged Rose, darting toward a beech.

"You may be struck!" Hazel warned her.

"Have to take a chance," Rose retorted. "Beech

trees are the safest, I've heard, and I can't stand out in the rain."

But the tree was not much shelter, and as the shower showed no indication of slackening, and as the girls were now fairly desperate, they decided to keep on. Their clothes could stand a good deal of rain before becoming wet through, and their shoes were waterproof, so they were not in such desperate plight as might otherwise have been the case.

But it grew darker and darker, and at last they found themselves stumbling along in the woods, tripping over fallen trees, banging into trunks and getting tangled in underbrush.

"We're off the trail!" cried Sylvia. "We can't go on. We must stop or we may come to some harm."

Frightened, they huddled together, while the rain beat down pitilessly.

"Oh, help! help!" suddenly screamed Rose. It was as though she could stand the strain no longer.

"Help! help!" she cried. "We are lost!"

Above the patter of the rain on the leaves, and above the low muttering of thunder a voice answered:

"Stay where you are. We're coming!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

FOUND

SILENCE followed this, to the girls at least, momentous announcement. That is as much silence as was possible under the circumstances, with the noise of the storm reverberating through the forest.

"Did—did you hear that?" gasped Sylvia, after a pause.

"Of course," answered Hazel, and she spoke a bit sharply. As if her nerves were near the breaking point.

"Was it—was it a voice?" Sylvia went on, as though she could not quite believe the evidence of her own ears. "Was it a voice, or one of those loons, or owls?"

"It was a *voice*," declared Mrs. Brownley. "I heard it distinctly. It must be some of our party searching for us. You had better call once more, girls. My voice simply refuses to make itself heard."

"Mr. Russman! Pete! Harry!" called Sylvia. "Where are you? Come to us!"

A crashing noise sounded in the underbrush, but it was too dark to see by whom it was made. Now and then a flash of lightning would vividly light up

the scene, but it was of such brief duration, and produced such a glare, that the girls and their chaperon could really see nothing beyond a black and dripping circle of trees that girt them about. Following Sylvia's cry, though, there came an answer.

"Stay where you are! We're coming. Don't move. There's a bad fall near where you are and you may slip over. Stand still."

"That doesn't sound like any of our friends!" exclaimed Alice.

"No," agreed Hazel. "But it's some one, at all events. And I never was so glad in all my life before to hear a human voice. It may be some of the other guides—those of Sam's party."

"Could it be—could it be—Roy?" faltered Rose.

"That isn't Roy's voice," declared Sylvia, with decision. "I only wish it were he! But he is probably too weak to answer in those firm tones."

"We're coming," the unseen rescuers went on. "Be there in just a few seconds now!"

The girls could see lights flashing among the trees and bushes. Lights that were not the vivid glares of the sky-electricity. The storm seemed to be dying out, at least the thunder was not so loud nor the flashes so frequent, but the drizzle of rain still kept up.

The girls huddled around Mrs. Brownley, wet and rather miserable, yet, aside from the depression caused by the failure to find Roy, there was plenty of spirit and spunk left in each and every one. They

were wet, tired and hungry, but they had not given up hope, not even when they knew they were lost.

"Oh, but to think of the walk back to the bungalow," half groaned Hazel. "Can we make it to-night, girls?"

"We'll *have* to!" insisted Sylvia.

"And there may be good news of Roy waiting for us," said Rose, eagerly. "That is, if this isn't a party that has already found him."

"I don't believe they are any of our friends." Sylvia spoke in a low voice. "They would know who we were, and they'd call us by name. And if they had found poor Roy they'd let us know that the first thing."

"But who can they be?" asked Alice.

"We'll know in another moment. Here they are!"

A number of lights flashed all around. They came from the pocket electric torches without which no camp is now complete. And the tiny glows were in the hands of four young men who crowded up along the dripping trail to face the lost ones.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting," said the leader, flashing his light in Sylvia's face. "But we didn't expect company, and we had gone to bed. We heard you call and——"

He interrupted himself suddenly to exclaim:

"Great pines and little fir trees! It is Night! Miss Pursell! What in the world are you doing here?" he cried.

"Oh! oh!" gasped Roy's sister, weakly. In an instant she had recognised Felton Ware—the Knight of the Overturned Canoe—the cavalier of the dance. And with him were his three companions who had helped to give the girls such a good time at the hotel.

"Look here, fellows!" Felton cried. "Here are our friends—the pretty girls."

He said it—shamelessly—openly, and none resented it. The said pretty girls were only too glad to see the boys.

"Well, if this isn't a go!" exclaimed Jimmie Pendleton.

"Is it true, or am I dreaming?" Bert Young wanted to know.

"If I am dreaming, don't wake me up," pleaded Carroll Beach.

"But I say!" went on Felton, eagerly. "What are you doing here? Out in the rain at night! Where's your camp? What has happened? You look——"

"Don't mention our looks, young man!" interrupted Aunt Theodora. "We know we must be frights. But is there any place around here where we can stay—a hotel or boarding-house? We are lost!"

"Why, come to our tent!" urged the Knight of the Overturned Canoe, eagerly. "We came up here to camp, but never expected to see you folks again. We have a big extra tent, ready for some more of

the fellows we expect next week. You can all fit into that nicely. There are cots in it. We can get you up some kind of a meal. You can't possibly travel through the woods now. Stay with us until morning, please."

"It sounds most inviting," sighed Sylvia.

"Welcome to our woodland camp, Princess of the Night," said Felton, whimsically, with a low bow. "I'm sorry we haven't a red velvet carpet to spread to the tent, but truth compels me to state that the trail is so winding that it would take a very large magic carpet to cover it. But what has happened?" he asked.

Sylvia told him, and her companions told him, singly, in a chorus, by duets, in a trio and then filled in any gaps that were left with a grand ensemble that left nothing unrelated.

Then the boys led the way back to their camp. A fire in the midst of a circle of tents was dying down, but there was dry wood to pile on, and soon there was a roaring blaze adding heat to its cheerfulness. Coffee was quickly made, food set out, and in the seclusion of a large tent Sylvia and her friends, with Mrs. Brownley, made themselves comfortable.

"If those young men aren't providential I never saw any persons who were," declared the chaperon, as she sat on the edge of a cot, munching a sandwich from one hand and waving an empty coffee cup with the other, to emphasise her point.

"They certainly are," agreed Rose.

The boys did everything possible for their unexpected visitors, and said they would escort them back to the bungalow the first thing in the morning. One of the young men was quite familiar with the woodland trails, having camped in that neighbourhood before.

"And we'll help you look for your brother," added Felton. "Bald Mountain is not a great way from here. But you certainly took the wrong trail. However, we're glad to see you again!"

"Well?" remarked Hazel, in a questioning tone, as she sat on the edge of her cot, after the boys had said "good-night;" and she looked at the others, the while swinging her stockinged feet to and fro to aid in drying them, for their shoes had been wet through.

"I don't know that I'd call it well," commented Sylvia, reflectively, "but I suppose we ought to be thankful that none of us is really ill. That's one blessing."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Brownley, "that is a blessing. We came out of the predicament very fortunately, I think."

"And it certainly was a predicament," added Rose, as she went to the flap of the tent to peer out.

"Looking for anything in particular?" asked Alice.

"Or any one?" inquired Sylvia, with decided emphasis.

Rose turned quickly, her cheeks showing redder

than ever in the glow of the lantern. Perhaps it was from the excitement of the day, however.

"I just wanted to see what the boys were doing," she answered. "I believe they are drying our shoes over an oil stove," she went on. "I can just see inside their cooking tent—it's open."

"Gracious! I hope they don't cook our shoes!" exclaimed Alice, with a laugh, and a most commendable effort to lend a little gaiety to a situation that was certainly in need of it. "I have read of starving sailors eating their shoe laces. Fortunately my walking boots are button ones," she added, with another little laugh.

"It's only when laces are of some sort of hide that they make soup of them," put in Mrs. Brownley, deciding to do what she could to help remove the load from Sylvia's mind.

"That's so," chimed in Hazel. "The ordinary cloth shoe lace would not make a very appetising meal. Though I suppose they could boil the tongue of a shoe, and serve it in some sort of an *entrée*," she went on. "And the shoe wouldn't be much the worse after the operation. Look, Rose, since you have undertaken the post of observer, and tell us if the boys are taking the tongues out of our shoes."

"So they won't talk in their sleep?" demanded Sylvia, rising to the occasion with a joke—"alleged," as she designated it afterward; when they were going over all the points of the momentous time.

"Aren't we silly?" demanded Hazel.

"It's just as well to try to be cheerful," said the chaperon. "Nothing is so bad as to lose hope, and while we haven't in the least done that, still it is just as well to try to have a little reserve fund of good-humor to fall back on in times of emergency. Oh, I didn't quite mean that!" she added, quickly, as she caught a look of alarm on Sylvia's face.

"It doesn't matter," was the quiet comment of Roy's sister. "It is just as well to recognise the fact that we—that I—may have to face an—emergency."

She halted and stumbled over the word, but the others knew how hard it must have been for her to speak it. And they all realised what a grim emergency might confront them.

But the little cloud soon passed, for Rose—brave little Rose—rising gallantly to the occasion, exclaimed:

"Those silly boys!"

"What are they up to now?" asked Hazel, for Rose was still at the tent-flap.

"Why, they're dancing around, holding our shoes, one on each hand, and actually they are waltzing—doing the hesitation with the shoes on their hands, held in the air."

"Really?" demanded Sylvia, and there was a rush on the part of the three girls to join Rose at the flap. Mrs. Brownley remained sitting with dignity on the edge of a cot. That is with dignity, but with certain reservations, for she had taken off some of her damp garments and she was just then engaged in

the process of shuffling her stockinged feet along a strip of carpet in the middle of the tent.

"It was the only way to bring back the circulation and get them warm," she explained afterward.

"The hesitation? It's a onestep!" declared Hazel, as she peered from their tent into the lighted and partly-open one where the boys were engaged in some mysterious rite.

"Yes, that's what they're doing," she continued, peering over Sylvia's shoulder. "I wonder which one has my shoes?"

"As if it made any difference," mocked Alice.

"Doesn't it make a difference with whom one dances?" asked Hazel.

"If you call that a dance!" said Alice.

"It is one—by proxy," suggested Sylvia. "Oh, the silly boys!"

The Knight of the Overturned Canoe and his chums had offered to dry the water-soaked shoes of their guests. And now the lads were holding the footwear on their hands, over the blaze of their cooking-tent oil stove, and to vary the proceeding, I suppose, now and then one of them would glide off, whistling some merry air, meanwhile waving aloft his hands (on which were the shoes) in a sort of syncopated dance rhythm.

"Well, they are trying to be cheerful," said Mrs. Brownley, as she came to have a peep.

"The more credit to them, considering what company they have on their hands," said Hazel.

"Nothing on their hands but shoes," said Alice, laughing.

"Besides, they were very glad to meet us," added Rose.

"They certainly are very nice boys," declared Sylvia. "And, oh, I am so glad they found us! Think of what we would have done if we had had to stay in the woods all night!"

"I never would have stayed," declared Alice. "I simply would have expired then and there."

"Then it certainly is a good thing the boys found us," Mrs. Brownley remarked. "Now, girls, I don't want to dictate to you, but really, I think you ought to get to bed. We are all cold and damp, and if we get off some of our wet things, and crawl in between the blankets, it may prevent us from taking cold. The sheets are not at all clammy," she went on, as she turned back the covers of her cot, and felt of the linen. "I must say those boys are clever housekeepers! I would not have believed it."

"Which is praise, indeed, even if it is not from—Oh, I never can think of his name!" cried Alice.

"Sir Hubert Stanley?" queried Rose.

"Yes, that's the one. And so you think the boys—I'm going to call them our boys," went on Alice, "are good housekeepers, Aunt Theodora?"

"Very good indeed—for boys," and she thus qualified it.

"Well, I think we'll take your advice, at any rate," said Sylvia. "I'm beginning to feel chilly."

"The boys have stopped their shoe-dance," reported Rose. "Oh! and one of them is coming this way!" she cried, as she scurried away from the tent-flap, for the girls, as well as Mrs. Brownley, were not in a presentable condition.

However, there was no cause for alarm, for when still at a distance from the tent, Bert Young called out:

"I say, wouldn't you like an oil stove in there, to dry yourselves out?"

"Indeed we would," answered Mrs. Brownley. "Please bring it, unlighted, and leave it outside the tent. We'll get it."

"Sounds like an order for fried oysters," commented Alice.

"Right-O!" came the reply, and a little later a modern oil stove was glowing in the girls' tent. Its warmth was grateful, and they hung some of their garments on chairs near it before getting into the cots.

They did not go to sleep at once—it would have been a physical impossibility under the circumstances—so they talked, while Mrs. Brownley kept one eye on the stove, fearing it might smoke or explode, so she said.

But it was a very well-behaved stove, and, when the tent was comfortably warmed, the flame was turned out, and the wayfarers tried to get a little rest.

It cannot be said that Sylvia or any of her chums passed a restful or comfortable night. They were

given the best of the young men's hospitality, but one cannot be wet through in the woods on a lost trail, torn by anxiety regarding a missing loved one, be anxious about those of a party from whom one is separated, and have pleasant dreams. It is too much to expect.

But the night finally passed, and with it the rain. The sun came up warm, with a promise of soon drying the woods, and after breakfast the party of young men prepared to accompany their guests back to the Russman bungalow. The camp of Felton and his chums, in the locality where the girls found them, had been planned long before they met at the dance, but neither party was aware of the other's intention.

"But it was the luckiest thing in the world," declared Felton, "that you stopped and called when you did. Look," and he showed Sylvia how the trail they were on when they had come to a halt led dangerously near a high cliff. Sylvia shuddered when she saw it.

"When we head back for the bungalow, can't we go by way of Bald Mountain?" asked Sylvia, as they were about to start. "It is barely possible that my poor brother may be there."

"It is a little longer way," Felton explained, "but of course we can use that route."

"And we may meet some of the guides, or others on the way," put in Rose, "who will give us good news."

"Perhaps," agreed Alice.

The girls were in better spirits now, though the strain was showing on Sylvia. However, she kept up bravely, and Rose, too, who had her own grief, put it aside to comfort Roy's sister.

They tramped through the woods, now glorious with sunshine. Finally Bald Mountain loomed before them. They must cross it to get on the trail that led to the Russman bungalow.

Sylvia and Felton were in the lead, the girl pressing on eagerly, and both of them, as well as every other member of the party, looked closely for any signs of the missing one. Occasionally they would stop and shout, but they neither saw nor heard aught of the other seekers—the guides or the Russman party.

It was near the top of Bald Mountain, when Sylvia, who was a few steps in advance, passed around a turn in the trail. Before her was an overhanging stone, forming a sort of niche in the side of the shaling rock of which the hill was formed. A huddled heap in the niche attracted her attention.

She caught her breath sharply, and grasped the arm of her companion.

"Look! Look!" Sylvia whispered.

"It's—it's a man," answered Felton. "Can it be——"

"It's Roy! It's my brother!" Sylvia cried aloud.
"I've found him!"

CHAPTER XXXV

RECOVERY

SYLVIA was so overcome for the moment, not knowing what might be her further discovery, that she trembled violently, and swayed as though about to fall. Felton put out his arms to catch her, but she fought back the weakness and smiled faintly at him.

"I—I am all right," she assured him.

"Really?" he asked. Mrs. Brownley came hurrying up.

"What is it?" she asked.

"We—we have found him," whispered Sylvia.

"But I am afraid, oh, I am so afraid——"

She did not finish, but they all knew what she meant.

Felton said not a word. He walked steadily up to the huddled figure lying under the ledge of rock. The sun was slanting into the niche.

Sylvia forced herself to follow him, and watched, as if fascinated, while her Knight leaned over the figure of her brother. Felton touched Roy with a tender hand, and then, after a moment—a moment of suspense—fraught with an agony that made it seem a year, he cried out:

"He's all right! He's alive—and sleeping!"

A silent prayer of thankfulness welled up, not only in the heart of Sylvia, but in the hearts of all her friends.

As they gathered around, Sylvia kneeling on the hard, stone floor of the niche beside her brother, he opened his eyes. And it needed but a glance to show that reason was again on her throne. He looked weak and emaciated and showed the effects of the terrible sufferings through which he had passed, but his eyes no longer glowed with the fire of delirium.

Roy sat up, gazed about him, but did not seem at all surprised at his condition or location—that is, for a moment. He looked at Sylvia recognisingly, and spoke coolly but in a weak voice:

“Hello, sis! How’s everybody?”

Sylvia could not keep a tremor out of her voice as she answered:

“All well. And you, Roy?”

“Oh, I—I’m feeling better. I——” And then he seemed to feel the strangeness of his condition, and realise that something unusual had occurred. A great wonder showed in his fever-sunken eyes. He tried to get up, but fell back weakly. Sylvia put her arm under him, as did Felton, and they held Roy up together.

“Why—why—what has happened?” he stammered.

“Haven’t you any recollection?” Sylvia asked.

“No. I—I——!”

He put his hand up to his head.

"Take it easy now, old man," said Felton, in a low voice. "Bring up that vacuum bottle, Carroll," he ordered. "A sip of hot coffee will warm you up, Roy."

Slowly Roy drank the hot beverage. The wonder in his questioning eyes grew, as he looked at Sylvia and her friends. The party had brought food with them, and Roy was given some sparingly, for it was evident that he was half-starved. Gradually a little strength came back to him.

"But what does it all mean?" he asked. "How did I get here? How did you get here, Sylvia? And Rose?"

He smiled at her, and put out his hand, which she clasped warmly.

"Look here, old man," said Felton. "I think explanations had better be deferred until you are a little stronger. We'll get some sort of a conveyance, and have you taken to the bungalow. You need a doctor, I'm thinking."

"Yes," answered Roy, in puzzled fashion. "I seem to remember something about a doctor. I know I went out in the woods to get something, but I don't recall what it was. It rained, and I walked about a thousand miles, I guess. Then I was very tired and I crawled in here. I must have slept the clock around, for it was sunrise when I came here, and it's sunrise again. But I can't understand it all. I feel a lot better—up here," and he put his hand to his head.

"Oh, I am *so* glad!" Sylvia murmured. She was sure her brother was now in his right mind, though very weak.

It would be a problem to get him back to the bungalow, but the boys helped solve that. They made a litter of some boughs and poles and carried Roy to the nearest road. Then some one went for a waggon, the bottom of which was filled with straw. Roy protested that he could sit up, but Mrs. Brownley took charge of him, as she knew something of nursing, and made him lie down.

"It's a pretty long drill to the Russman bungalow," suggested Felton. "Now there's a pretty good sanitarium, with some doctors our family know, not far from here. Why not take him there?"

"We will!" Sylvia quickly decided. Roy made no objection. He smiled up into his sister's face, reached out for the hand of Rose again, and seemed content.

The sanitarium of which Felton had spoken proved to be just the place for Roy. He needed medical treatment of a different sort from that his ailment had at first called for. The head doctor knew Sylvia's "Knight," as she laughingly called him, and the physician promised to give Roy every care and attention.

Sylvia and Rose arranged to stay at a boarding-house connected with the institution, while Mrs. Brownley, Alice and Hazel would return to the Russman bungalow, tell the good news, get their own

belongings, as well as those of Rose and Sylvia, and join them later.

Felton and his chums would pilot the party to the "deserted bungalow," as it was occasionally called, and then they would return to their own camp.

These arrangements were carried out. On the way to the bungalow the party met some of the guides who were searching for the lost girls and Mrs. Brownley. The good news was soon spread, and again Old Sam blew the tidings on his conch horn. The search had ended.

"But, oh! I wonder if Roy will remember that missing formula, that means so much to him?" said Rose to Sylvia.

"It will be hard to say," was the answer. "We must not hope for too much."

Roy's physical improvement was rapid, once he was given the proper care and treatment at the sanitarium. The shock and exposure while wandering in the woods had restored his mind. He progressed every hour, it seemed, now that Sylvia and Rose were with him. Harry Montray was again to take up his quarters with his friend, and soon the party of Nowadays Girls was complete once more, with the addition of Roy and Harry.

As yet nothing had been said to Roy regarding the missing formula. His memory came back to him, and he recalled everything up to the time of rushing out of the bungalow in a delirium and off into the

woods. What happened to him there, neither he nor any one else could say.

It was apparent that he had wandered far. What he ate, if anything, no one knew, but unconsciously he may have appropriated food from some camp from which the owners were temporarily absent. And finally he had wandered to Bald Mountain, and fallen into a natural sleep as the fever left him. Luckily he had not been much out in the wet, though heavy dews had drenched him.

Every day saw a further improvement in the invalid, until at last came a time when he could go out into the woods with his sister and the other girls.

And then, like a flash from a clear sky, there came to Roy that which he had found and lost—the memory of the formula.

They were all walking in the beautiful woods one day when Roy suddenly began sniffing the air, as though some new odour, different from that of balsam and fir, came to him.

“What is it?” asked Sylvia.

“That smell—what is it?” he demanded, sharply.

“Oh, it’s a menthol pencil I’m using,” said Mrs. Brownley. “I have a slight headache, and that nearly always cures it. It’s simply menthol, and perhaps——”

“That’s it!” cried Roy, interrupting. “That’s where the whole trouble is! The menthol smell brings it all back to me—that and the name! It’s methane

—that's what I need to use to complete the formula! It's methane! That one element slipped from me, and I couldn't recall it to save my life. The mention of menthol brought it back to me, though methane isn't at all like menthol. It was just the smell and the similarity of names."

"But what does it all mean?" asked Rose, looking bewildered.

"It means that I have rediscovered the chemical formula I lost!" Roy cried. "It's complete now. I must write it down before I lose it again."

He scribbled some chemical symbols on a bit of white birch bark that Sylvia hastily tore from a tree for him, and put it in his pocket. But not before he had looked at it for a moment, murmuring:

"Ah, there you are! You shan't get away from me again! I have the lost formula! Now I'll show 'em what's what!"

"Oh, Roy, I am so glad!" cried Sylvia, her eyes bright with tears—tears of joy.

And Harry Montray rejoiced with his friend over the recovery of the valuable discovery. He insisted on sending a wire to the firm in New York, and Roy received a congratulatory telegram in response. It meant much to the firm, and more perhaps to Roy in the way of honour and wealth.

And now my little story is drawing to a close. Indeed there is really nothing left to tell. For with Roy's physical and mental recovery, which waxed more perfect every day, all the worriment of Sylvia

and Rose, not to mention that of their friends, passed away.

Then came happy times for the Nowadays Girls and the boys; for the Knight of the Overturned Canoe and his chums came to see them quite often. Indeed, after Roy was able to leave the sanitarium he and Sylvia arranged to open a camp for themselves in the woods, and there entertain their friends. And this was done.

Canoeing, boating, fishing, long tramps in the woods, pleasant evenings about the camp fire, an occasional dance—all this made up the remainder of a happy summer.

"Well, how did you like my Adirondack outing?" asked Sylvia of her girl chums one day when, regretfully enough, they began to think of returning to the city and preparing for their college careers.

"It was just perfectly all right, my dear!" said Rose, as she went down the path toward the lake in response to a call from Roy, who was in a canoe.

"Couldn't have been better!" declared Hazel.

"And if I were only sure we would have as scrumptious a time next season I would be perfectly happy," sighed Alice.

"We shall go somewhere," Sylvia decided. "The Nowadays Club will live for many years. But we have plenty of time to pick out another place before next summer."

And those of you who care to follow the future fortunes, fun and frolic of our friends may do so

in the next volume of this series, to be called: "The Nowadays Girls on Casco Bay; or, The Treasure Box of Orr's Island."

The outing was over. By easy stages Sylvia and her chums were returning from the Adirondacks. Once more they stopped at Saranac Inn. It was a night of the dance. Sylvia sat out on a veranda in the shadows.

"May I have this next waltz?" a voice murmured at her ear.

"What is it?" she asked. It will be noticed that she did not ask "who."

"A canoe glide," was the laughing answer. "May I?"

"You may," said Sylvia.

And, as she joined her companions in the room where the dreamy music called to willing feet, we will take leave of her and the other Nowadays Girls.

THE END

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